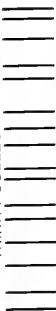


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THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO
ST. LUKE
XVII-XXIV
THE REV.
J. M. B. ROSS, M.A.

A DEVOTIONAL
COMMENTARY



May 19, 1930.

Robert R. Bonis,
Wycliffe College,
Toronto.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST LUKE

APR 24 1895

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THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY
4 Bouverie Street, London, E.C. 4

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY
Edited by the Rev. C. H. IRWIN, D.D.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST LUKE

XVIII—XXIV.

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

By the

Rev. J. M. E. ROSS, M.A.

Author of "A Devotional Commentary on 1st Peter," etc



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LXXI

TWO IN THE TEMPLE

"And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
—LUKE xviii. 9-14.

We call this a parable but is it really such? Might it not be a slice out of life? It has been pointed out that our Lord's parables are of two kinds. Some are more cryptic: the outward story has a hidden meaning which needs to be unfolded before the Master's message in the story is made plain—the parable of the sower is of this type. Probably these were intended to fulfil a sifting purpose, alluring those of Christ's hearers who were intellectually in earnest and intent upon discovery. Other parables are more direct: their intention is not in the least concealed: they are their own interpretation. The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus belongs to this

Luke xviii.
9-14.
A Plain
Parable.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii. class, and this story of the Two in the Temple.
9-14. Possibly our Lord might have seen two such men standing in God's house, or even overheard what they were saying. The incident may have been imaginary, and yet was not merely imaginary: it was the compressed essence of much that was happening in the Temple and wherever men met for worship.

**In the
Temple**

1. It is a touch of deep moral insight which makes the background of this scene the Temple. On the street how differently the two figures would have appeared! The one would have drawn after him the reverence of his neighbours, and would have walked in the odour of sanctity. He made a fine figure as he climbed the holy hill, and many an eye looked after him with envy and admiration. The other had made himself a social outcast—despised for his calling, hated for his unpatriotic servitude to the invading power. But here before another and higher tribunal than that of public opinion all the proportions and perspectives were changed. Fine raiment, social reputation, complacent self-praise—these things weighed as nothing in the Temple balances. All things—even the most hidden things of life, character, and motive—were naked and open to the Lord of the Temple, Who searched His worshippers through and through, as Isaiah saw, with “the eyes of His glory.”

**Perfect
Portraits**

2. When we turn from the scene to the men, we reverently admire the matchless skill which could compress portraits so perfect into words so few. The Pharisee had his good points. He was respectable,

Two in the Temple

by his very name and class, very different from some Luke xviii. of his neighbours: when he said, "I thank Thee 9-14. that I am not as other men are," he gave a glance over his cold shoulder to that other man in the dim corner, so different in record and reputation, "or even as this publican." He had some record of self-discipline, "I fast twice in the week." He had some record also of holy generosity, "I give tithes of all that I possess."

This record was in its way very fine, but it was all ultra-legal in spirit. When the natural man seeks to work out his own salvation he usually lands himself either in despair or in pride: it is only a soul taught of the Christian gospel who finds his way between the two extremes. This man's self-appraisal left him self-satisfied and vain-glorious: he had no glimpse of the heart's innermost need: he was typical of the spirit with which Christ could do nothing.

As for the publican—his designation was enough to condemn him, and his calling at the best was not very savoury. But he at least knew himself: he brought no pride to God's altar: he was under no illusions as he stood in God's presence. "God be merciful to me, *the sinner*," he prayed, bringing all the light of God's truth and holiness to a focus upon himself. So he, bringing nothing else, at least supplied a point at which God could begin.

"Blest are the discontented
That evermore desire,
Blest are the souls tormented
In that ascending fire:

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii.
9-14.

From God Himself asunder
They cannot long remain ;
For nothing else and under
Can ever heal their pain."

The Fate
of Two
Prayers.

3. And so, to one who saw as Christ saw, the issue was no surprise. He proclaims it with solemn emphasis: "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." As the two came down from the holy hill, no doubt the verdict of the street was the same as it had been before: the Pharisee still trailed his robe of sanctity to the admiration of all beholders: the Publican still knew that he bore the condemnation of scornful eyes. But the verdict of the street was, as it always is, a poor shallow thing; the Verdict that mattered had declared itself from the Mercy-seat; the old prayer of the *Miserere* had found its answer: "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow: make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." The old surprise of the divine loving-kindness had renewed itself: "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Many longer and more eloquent prayers than the publican's had been offered in that place of prayer: and perhaps much splendid music had risen no higher than the roof. But this brief cry of genuine heart-felt need rose to the very Throne, like an arrow shot home to its mark, and brought back the answer which it went to seek.

Two in the Temple

It all gathers itself into a double lesson.

Luke xviii.

It is a warning against false judgment of our fellow-men. “He spake this parable unto certain which . . . despised others.” It is a constant temptation to follow the judgment of the street, to hang the dog which has the bad name, to assume that the fine robe and the clean heart go together. Bunyan’s quaint comment on this case is that “the Pharisee did carry the bell and wear the garland for religion ; the publican was counted vile and base and reckoned among the worst of men, even as our informers and bum-bailiffs are with us at this day.” But Christ was not deceived by bells and garlands : His eyes, which were as a flame of fire, saw the truth of things ; and He knew how different the judgment of God might be from the judgment of the street. It is not only the judgment of the street that may go wrong, but even the judgment of the Church : it is conceivable that even in the Temple itself priests and congregation might have been as much misled by appearances as any street corner loiterer. Bunyan knew that in his day a man might have a great name for holiness who could pray fluently. “It is at this day wonderful common for men to pray extempore. To pray by a book, by a premeditated set form is now out of fashion. He is counted nobody now that cannot at any moment, at a minute’s warning, make a prayer of half-an-hour long. I am not against extempore prayer, for I believe it to be the best kind of praying ; but yet I am jealous that there are a great many such prayers made, especially in pulpits and public meetings, without the breathing

9-14.

The Peril of
the External
Test.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii. 9-14. of the Holy Ghost in them. For if a Pharisee of old could do so, why may not a Pharisee do the same now ? ” There is a danger in all external tests, whether of the temple or of the street : we must leave judgment to Him who sees.

The Task of
being Real.

It is equally a lesson in sincerity and humility for ourselves. It is a lesson in humility. The temptation to vanity takes many forms, and some have fallen into the Pharisee's snare who never wore the Pharisee's robe. If some have been proud of their orthodoxy, some have been prouder still of their heresies. If some have been vain of their church attendance, some have been vainer still of their non-churchgoing. If some have thanked God that they were not as drunkards, thieves, and harlots, others have thanked Him with even louder voices that they were not of the hypocrites who keep Sabbaths and believe creeds. Pride and vanity are hard to slay : when the last Pharisee was laid in his tomb, pride and vanity went striding on to find new incarnations and to adapt themselves to new circumstances. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, even if he be not a Pharisee, even if he never crosses a Temple threshold, take heed lest he fall. The parable is equally a lesson in sincerity. In one generation the Pharisee's posture may be the thing that attracts admiration and creates reputation : in another the taste may have changed, and the Publican's breast-beating may be more in favour. But in any age the only thing that satisfies is to be real before God. If we, with the help of His searching word, His enlightening Spirit, can achieve this, then

Two in the Temple

we shall see ourselves in His light : we shall know Luke xviii.
something of our deep unutterable need : we shall 9-14.
trust in the grace that is able to cleanse, to restore,
to keep, and finally to make perfect. Are we sur-
prised that it is in answer to our lowly faith that
the justification and restoration come ? To trust is
such a small thing : it leaves no room for boasting,
no place for display. Yet it is everything, for it
puts the soul into the right attitude, and God does
all the rest.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Is it, if heaven the future showed,
Is it the all-severest mode
To see ourselves with the eyes of God ?
God rather grant, at His assize,
He see us not with our own eyes

Francis Thompson

LXXII

THE GREAT REFUSAL

“ And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good ? none is good, save One, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, He said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing : sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow Me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful : for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, He said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved ? And He said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee. And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”—LUKE xviii. 18-30.

Luke xviii. It is curious that the story of the rich young ruler
18-30. is given by all three Synoptics immediately after the
Rich but incident of the mothers and their children. But
Sorrowful. St Luke’s portrait of him is less vivid than that of
the other evangelists. Luke does not tell us that he
was young, does not tell us that he came running,

The Great Refusal

does not tell us that Jesus, beholding him, loved **Luke xviii.** him. But he does give us two vivid phrases, startling **18-30.** in their contrast. *Very rich—very sorrowful*: if we put these phrases together, they give us a key to much that is here. Their conjunction is unconventional—with that unconventionality which would surprise us again and again in the Gospels were it not so familiar. If we had read that this man was very rich, but some accident had torn away the companion phrase, what should we be inclined to insert? Very comfortable? very contented? very happy? The companion phrase, when we look at it, shakes all our cherished assumptions. Any commentator writing, or any preacher speaking, of this matter may well pray to avoid cant. Cant in this realm is dangerously easy. Men who denounce wealth, be they preachers in pulpits or orators in Hyde Park, have shown no decided aversion to large salaries when these came their way. Yet we may perhaps keep clear of cant by keeping close to reality, and this case of the rich ruler condenses into itself certain things which have over and over again been made apparent in life and experience.

1. *Wealth has its limitations which even a hasty glance can see.* It can give so much: yes—and it can secure so little. Wealth can enter a house, and decorate it royally, and furnish it luxuriously, and man it with servants indoors and guards at the gate—and yet cannot keep *sorrow* outside! He was “very rich”; yet he was very sorrowful.

2. *The human heart is insatiable, demanding two worlds to be its portion.* This man had much of this **Man's Hungry Heart.**

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii. world, yet he wanted more. He was wealthy when
18-30. he came : yet he was dissatisfied. Laden as he was with the temporal, he was in quest of the eternal. " Good Master," he said, " what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? " Jesus said unto him, " Why callest thou Me good ? None is good, save one, that is God." Was this because He detected a touch of patronage in the mode of address ? Or was the Master leading on the inquirer, as if He were saying, " God is the one source of goodness and Himself the supreme good : He will show you, if you ask Him " ? The latter interpretation seems the more likely when we remember the eagerness and the humility in St Mark's portrait of the man, " running " and " kneeling "—and the fact that Jesus, when He looked on him, loved him. Our Lord saw that at least he was wistful after the eternal. He saw the same look on some other faces also. The Jews were a keen and clever mercantile people, yet they had in them the traditions of the prophets, the memories of those who saw the glory on Mount Sinai : and so they, even amid their material occupations, were often hungry for the eternal more than they knew. Juliana of Norwich had a vision in which she saw a little round ball in her hand about the size of a hazelnut. And when she asked what it was, she was told that it was " the world of things that are made." Perhaps it takes the eyes of a saint to see the world so small. Yet often the query has crossed the minds of those who could not pretend to be saints—Is the world, after all, big enough to satisfy ? That query had crossed this man's mind, and it had

The Great Refusal

brought him into the presence of the Master with **Luke xviii.**
his question about eternal life. **18-30.**

3. If the human heart wants two worlds, *two* **Between**
worlds often claim the human heart, and the soul is **two Worlds.**
almost torn asunder, earthbound and star-led at the
same instant. This man, fairly well satisfied with
his own ideals and his attainment of them, was
suddenly brought face to face with the utmost alti-
tude of service and sacrifice. "Yet lackest thou one
thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the
poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and
come, follow Me." Robert Louis Stevenson tells us
that "the art of growing rich is not only quite
distinct from that of doing good, but the practice
of the one does not at all train a man for practising
the other." Certainly this man had not been at all
trained by his possessions for the practice of such a
rare and difficult ideal as Christ now set before him.
Yet, feeling the pull of his worldly goods on the one
side, and feeling also the spell, if not of Christ's
counsel, at any rate of Christ's personality and
authority on the other, he was pulled this way and
that by two opposite laws of gravitation. If a man
is given a sight of his supreme duty, he may yield
to it or defy it. But if he defies it, can he ever be
happy again? He has seen the path to the stars,
and yet he remains "tame in earth's paddock as her
prize."

Did our Lord ask an unreasonable thing in bidding **A Soul**
the man cut loose from the lower gravitation and **needing**
obey the higher call? In one sense He was always **Surgery**
bidding men to do that, but there was something

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii. 18-30. unusual about His clear, exact prescription in this case. He did not ask this from every one; the sisters of Bethany, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathæa, were not told to sell all. And further, if disciples generally were to pass on their wealth to others lest their own souls be ensnared, would they not be putting temptation in the way of those others? Would not the risk move with the riches? There must have been something in the special case: the man's heart was too much wrapped up in his belongings: surgery was needed to save him. The theory has been advanced that this man may have been Saul of Tarsus. It is an alluring theory. It explains a great deal. Saul at this time must have been young, and he was unusually early a ruler among the Jews. If this were he, it would explain what the goad was against which, according to a phrase in his conversion-story, he kicked—it was the memory of this interview and of this appeal so pointed and clear. It would also explain Paul's words about himself, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." And there would be some satisfaction in knowing that the rich ruler's refusal was only temporary, and that he did not turn away for ever. But fascinating though the theory is, there is no real ground for holding it: it is not likely that Paul's epistles would tell no story of so great and poignant a memory: it is not likely that St Luke, Paul's friend and comrade, would here give no hint of the mighty issue of this meeting. The most we can say is that this man lacked what Paul in his self-surrender came to have, the eager

The Great Refusal

and whole-hearted note. Mark Rutherford asks in **Luke xviii.** his novel, *Catherine Furze*, "Is the man attractive **18-30.** to you who has kept the law and done nothing more?" Even if this ruler's claims for himself in the matter of law-keeping were justified, our impression of him would be somewhat bare and cold. What he lacks is not obedience to a law, not even obedience to the Master's counsel, but something which that counsel was intended to elicit, the eager note, the note of self-oblation. Had he reached that, instead of being very rich and very sorrowful, he might have been very poor, but he would have been very happy. His divided soul would have found its unity in self-surrender, and though he might have nothing he would have possessed all things.

When the onlookers heard the sad reflections of **The** the Master on this case, and especially when they **Impossible** heard the parable of the camel and the needle's **made** eye, they cried out, "Who, then, can be saved?" **Possible.** We are all, even if not wealthy, so much bound up with the necessity of money-getting, and therefore so much of one heart and motive with the wealthy and successful, that if these searching tests are to be applied, there is small chance even for the best of us! So they felt then, and so we may feel still, who know how much the money-necessity is wrapped up with our lives, and the money-standard is apt to dominate our judgments. Yet there is something intentional and salutary in the very startlingness of our Lord's words. "I know," Mr Chesterton says, "that the most modern manufacture has been really occupied in trying to produce an abnormally large

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii. 18-30. needle. I know that the most recent biologists have been chiefly anxious to discover a very small camel. But if we diminish the camel to his smallest, or open the eye of the needle to its largest—if, in short, we assume the words of Christ to have meant the very least that they could mean, His words must at the very least mean this—that rich men are not very likely to be morally trustworthy. Christianity even when watered down is hot enough to boil all modern society to rags. The mere minimum of the Church would be a deadly ultimatum to the world!" Perhaps this was what roused Christ's hearers to their protests—this sense of a "deadly ultimatum" to all their most cherished assumptions. But it was like the Master to leave the whole matter on the note of hope. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." We have only to turn a page to see how true this was. "Zacchæus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." And Jesus said unto him, "This day is salvation come to this house." The grace that saved Zacchæus could have saved the rich young ruler too had his heart been open, and the faith that yields to the Saviour is the only victory that overcometh the world.

The Sure
Reward.

Was it a boastful anti-climax when Peter, readiest in speech as always, interposed and said, "Lo, we have left all and followed Thee"? It was not necessarily boastful, any more than the question, "What shall we have?" implied in what is given

The Great Refusal

us here and explicitly recorded by St Matthew, was Luke xviii. necessarily greedy. The Master was making a tremendous claim on their devotion: they had shown their loyalty in a heroic and most practical way: there was some reason in asking how it was all to end. The doctrine that virtue is its own reward is a true doctrine to a certain point, but if it is pushed too far the human heart protests against it. There is no ultimate reason why men should trouble themselves to be virtuous unless virtue belongs to the nature of things; and if virtue does belong to the nature of things, then some day, somehow, that nature of things must assert itself and those who have served it must share in its triumph. That it would be so was the Master's faith. "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." The words are vivid and pictorial, no doubt—not capable of a wooden and literal interpretation, and yet not after all to be etherealised into a mere parable. Those who were outcast from their old society found a new society forming. If a fellowship closed against them, a new and better fellowship opened to them. The words cover a process which we can see going on before the New Testament record closes. "There is no man that hath left house or parents, . . ." said Christ, "who shall not receive manifold." "Salute Rufus," wrote St Paul, who had made himself homeless and friendless for Christ's sake, "salute Rufus and *his mother and*

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii. *mine.*" So the hearts that had forsaken all were
18-30. not left desolate, but discovered round about them,
created out of nothingness by the magic of the
Master's name, the beginnings of a new household
and of an eternal heritage.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

The only world worthy of being regarded as ideal is that which carries within it the present world with its meaning understood, and its worth deepened. It is our own world given back again, item by item, with all the elements that constitute it multiplied a hundredfold in value, raised to a higher spiritual power.

Edward Caird

LXXIII

THE WAY AND THE WAYSIDE

“Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on : And they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death : and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things : and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. And it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging : And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace : but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him : and when he was come near, He asked him, Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee ? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight : thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God : and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.”—LUKE xviii. 31-43.

“HE took the twelve aside”—here was something Luke xviii. too sacred or too mysterious to be shared meantime 31-43- with any common listener. St Luke’s somewhat bare and brief account of this incident should be carefully compared with that in St Mark x. 32, for the latter preserves some touches of vividness which

More about
the Cross.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii. 31-43. we would not willingly allow to fade—the Master's rapt and exalted mood, the wonder and fear of the disciples as they gazed upon Him. A measure of that awe-struck amazement might well return upon us even as we study St Luke's less picturesque narrative or any time we find our Lord reverting to the theme of His Cross: we are not amazed, with the wonder that is next door to worship, only because our familiarity has begotten indifference. But if the Master will take us aside with the twelve, and we go with Him in a prayerful mood, then perhaps even our time-hardened hearts shall renew their awe and feel again the primal wonder.

“He took the twelve aside and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.” Here was the Master's “Song of Ascents.” It was an old and holy instinct of His race, this going up to Jerusalem. The physical going-up to that city on the ridge was the perpetual parable of a spiritual going-up, the aspiring climb of those who would stand before God in Zion. The familiar journey had its psalms written for it—Psalm cxxi., “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills”; Psalm cxxii., “I was glad when they said unto me”; Psalm cxxv., “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion”; and many another, to suit many a mood and many a need. But never had any one made that ascent before upon so strange an errand. Some had come to worship and some to make gain, and some because it was the custom of the fathers. But He came to make Himself the very Paschal Lamb, to give His life a ransom for many.

The Way and the Wayside

This was what He sought to teach His disciples **Luke xviii.**
over and over. He had given them ere this two **31-43.**
lessons on the Cross—in this Gospel they are found **Before the**
at ix. 22 and ix. 44—after Cæsarea Philippi and **Storm.**
after the Mount of Transfiguration. Once more He
returns to the theme. “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written through the prophets”—an unusual phrase—“for the Son of Man shall be accomplished.” All things that were written through the prophets!—unconscious mouth-pieces of greater things than they knew—the passage in Isaiah about the suffering Servant who should make his soul an offering for sin, the passage in Zechariah about the Shepherd that should be smitten and the sheep scattered, the passage in Jeremiah about the new Covenant and the forgiveness of sins—these and many another, in tune with the deepest purposes of life and history, were on the eve of their fulfilment now. “For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and illtreated, and spat upon; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again.” For the moment it was all clear to the Master’s vision, as a landscape may be clear in the calm before the breaking of a storm, when all nature is expectant and the far hills seem ominously close at hand.

The sentence that follows has an interest of its **Dull Hearts**
own, because it occupies the place taken in the two other synoptics by the story of the Sons of Zebedee. The others gave an *instance* to show how little the disciples understood: “James and John, the sons

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii. 31-43. of Zebedee, came unto Him saying, Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. . . . Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory." They could not have given a clearer proof of how little they had grasped the meaning of the instruction which had gone before. St Luke omits the instance, but he describes the condition of which the instance was a proof: "they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." This dullness in the disciples is very disappointing to us who have seen them in stained-glass windows and who idealise them somewhat because of their proximity to the Master. But whatever the shock to our feelings, the record is very frank. The Infallibility Decree of 1870 had not been promulgated in the year 30, and the Apostles were not infallible in those early days nor were they likely to be for a very long time. They made all manner of mistakes: they were slow to share what their Master was yearning to give them. Yet there is something very helpful to us in the fact of their blundering and in the frankness of its record. They tell us that they made many mistakes: *yet they never accuse their Master of any mistake*: they would have joined in saying with one voice, "We know Him that is true and we are in Him that is true." And this also is full of comfort—that these dull men, who were so slow to understand their Master, *could certainly never have invented Him*. Every step of the narrative shows how high He was above their expectation

The Way and the Wayside

and conception: when we see men's eyes manifestly dazzled by the light, we know it is no will-o'-the-wisp on which they are gazing, it is the very sunrise and no dream.

The Master is still upon the way up to Jerusalem, but for the moment our glance is deflected to the wayside. For "it came to pass, as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging." It is Mark who gives his name—Bartimæus. Matthew tells of two blind men, but names neither of them. The phrase "by the wayside" recalls kindred phrases and other incidents. The pilgrim-Christ on His journeys through the land was never careless of those He met by the way. "Some seed fell by the wayside," but the fowls did not always come and devour it up. Matthew was called by the wayside, from his place at the receipt of custom. Zacchæus found salvation this very day by the wayside on the other side of Jericho. And by the wayside this blind man sat and begged, and accomplished the best day's begging in all history. For if there was ever a wayside need—when Jesus of Nazareth passed by, there was also a wayside grace. Even after the Resurrection it was so: "did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us *by the way*?"

The story is perfect in its simplicity, in its transparent truth. "A certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging: and, hearing the multitude pass by"—accustomed to take in impressions through that channel since the channel of vision was closed—"he asked what it meant. And they told him, that

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii 31-43. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." It was a nine-days' wonder, no doubt, and a tremendous excitement, that so famous a person should visit their little town; how many of them guessed that Destiny was passing close to them in the passing of Jesus, and that this same Jesus would pass down through the ages,

". . . with unhurrying chase
And unperturbèd pace,"

carrying destiny with Him wherever He should go? This one man, at least, was determined not to lose his chance. "He cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Perhaps the Master was teaching as He slowly walked along, and the crowd resented the tiresome interruption. Or more likely they regarded the beggar's intrusion as an affront to a distinguished Person. So "the people in front"—the leaders of the crowd as it came up to him—"checked him and told him to be quiet," as Dr Moffatt vividly renders it. The ears of Bartimæus, however, were quick enough to tell him that the crowd was still passing, and that the Master was not likely to be beyond the range of his voice, so "he kept shouting"—the verb is now in the imperfect—"so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." A cry like that could not be in vain when Jesus of Nazareth passed by: even if sometimes the heavens might be as brass and the earth as iron, when He passed by those who asked received, and those who sought found, and to those who knocked the door of hope was opened. So "Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought"

The Way and the Wayside

—Luke's physicianly instinct sees the blind man led **Luke xviii.** by helping hands—"and when He was come near, **31-43.** He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Can we think ourselves into the blind man's case and imagine the thrill of that overwhelming moment, the key of liberty turning in the door that had been closed for so long, night folding her dark wings and making ready to flee away? It was a business-like transaction, so far as the brief record goes, though the short phrases need not hide from us either the pity of the Saviour or the joy of the beggar who came into his heritage of light. "He said, Lord, that I may receive my sight." "And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God, and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

It is hard to believe, amid all this laughter, song, **The Wayside** and thanksgiving, that up among the grim hills **Grace** which rise yonder above Jericho, Jerusalem waits, with the cross in reserve. But Christ did not forget. And perhaps the lesson for us at the moment is this that even when He was "going up to Jerusalem" He was not so absorbed in His own sorrow that He forgot the wayside beggar or the ordinary casual opportunities of helping human lives. On the way—and such a way, the way that ended in the *Via Dolorosa*—He had a heart for the wayside waif and an ear for the wayside call. This lesson transcends geography as it outlasts time. Even Protestants may have their wayside shrines, not built of stone

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xviii. 31-43. and lime nor decked with images and flowers, but very dear and sacred nevertheless—the memories of how the Master met them by the wayside and conferred upon them wayside gifts, wayside revelations, surprises of loving kindness. It was His habit long ago : it is His habit still. Let us who are pilgrims praise Him !

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Every man in this world shall in some sense or other bear a cross. Few men escape it, and it is not well with them that do ; but they only bear it well that follow Christ, and tread in His steps, and bear it for His sake, and walk as He walked.

Jeremy Taylor

LXXIV

ZACCHAEUS

And Jesus entered and passed through Jerieho. And, behold there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus Who He was ; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him : for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down ; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord ; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
—LUKE xix. 1-10.

THERE is an intense human interest in this engaging story of the little man who climbed the tree. It is all the more human because it illustrates that strange meeting-ground of fate and freedom, the physical and the volitional, in which we humans continually dwell. It has been remarked that if the nose of Cleopatra had been a fraction shorter or longer the course of history might have been different. And if Zacchæus had been a man of ordinary height, not in need of tree-climbing expedients, should we have

LUKE xix.
1-10.

A Man and
a Tree.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix. had this story of seeking, saving grace? Who can
I-10. say? But anyhow, the story is here. There are certain details of grammar and construction suggesting that St Luke is once more quoting from an Aramaic source. One can imagine how the eyes of this evangelist of grace, this apostle of the outsider, would glisten and how his heart would thrill, when he came on such a record as this: it enshrined the very gospel, and still after all the centuries the fragrance of its message is fresh and strong.

Luke and the Publicans. Jericho was a busy little city, a centre of the balsam trade, a post on one of the great trade-routes to Jerusalem. It was natural, then, that Roman tax-gatherers should be found there, and that one of their chief officials—a commissioner of taxes, as we might say—should have there his office and his home. The name Zacchaeus has a Jewish sound: had he been a heathen, as well as a publican, his critics would have been likely to mention that amongst their reproaches. It was crime enough, however, to be a tax-gatherer in the Roman pay, a crime against patriotism, and, as things went in that despised calling, very likely a crime against honesty and social justice also. St Luke seems, however, to have an interest in those tax-gatherers equal to his interest in, and appreciation of, the centurions. He tells us how the publicans came to be baptised of John (iii. 12); how Levi, the publican, left all and followed Jesus (v. 28); how the publicans appreciated our Lord's references to John (vii. 29); how the publicans drew near to hear the Master (xv. 1); and it is he who records the parable of the Pharisee

Zacchaeus

and the Publican (xviii. 10). This cannot be accidental: there must have been some fine qualities in these men, qualities little guessed by their neighbours because of the social ostracism which made them outsiders, but waiting to be elicited by a touch of kindliness, by an approach of grace. Luke xix. 1-10.

The beginning of salvation for Zacchaeus lay in his curiosity. How often souls have climbed the sacred stairway of those three steps—curiosity, wonder, worship! Even that first step need not be despised, if it leads to the second and third. There was a stir in Jericho because of this distinguished Stranger passing through: perhaps the excitement of the Bartimaeus incident had sent its pulses through the whole community. “He sought”—the verb is in the imperfect—“he kept seeking to see Jesus Who He was”—to recognise by face one of Whom he had heard by name. The tale is vividly told. One can see him trying to peer between the shoulders of the thronging crowd. Then, failing to get a glimpse by normal means, he ran ahead of the crowd, seeking for some vantage-point. Probably in the excitement of the moment, no one noticed him. One wonders what he would have said if he had been told that the eyes of many generations, in many lands, would follow him with a wistful interest, half-amused, half-envious, upon that brief struggle for position! Beside the road stood a fig-mulberry, a good tree to climb, with low spreading branches: Zacchaeus saw his chance and took it, no doubt congratulating himself upon his good fortune. But his fortune was better than his best hopes. “When Jesus came to

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix.
1-10.

the place, He looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully." It was a vast surprise to Zacchaeus that he should have been so singled out, called by name, honoured above his neighbours. But God's grace often proves itself to be grace indeed by enfolding within itself surprises of loving-kindness : happy are we if, even after repeated miracles of mercy, we do not lose our sense of surprise.

A Publican's
Penitence.

The sentences that follow are one of the clearest illustrations in history of the fact that men may turn life's most sacred lessons, even the Gospel, even Christ Himself, to their salvation or their destruction. Some there had no eyes for the grace or for the wisdom of the Master's action : they only saw an impropriety : " they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner " —foolish, narrow, prejudiced souls, limiting the Infinite Compassion by their miserable use-and-wont, allowed to stand for a moment beside the Mercy that had a wideness in it like the wideness of the sea, and yet going away smaller and more prejudiced than when they came. But if they turned their opportunity into judgment, Zacchaeus turned his into salvation. " He stood "—a curious phrase, almost suggesting an attitude solemnly taken up as by one who would bind himself with a public and deliberate vow—" He stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ; and if I have taken anything from any man

Zacchaeus

by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." There **Luke xix.**
has been some difference of opinion as to the meaning **1-10.**
of these words, some holding that this had been the
habitual practice of Zacchaeus, by which he sought
to commend himself to the approval of Christ, others
that this was his new resolve, to which his will and
conscience had just been quickened by the Saviour's
grace to him. The whole atmosphere of the passage
involves the second interpretation. The "behold"
seems to introduce a sudden resolution, and further
a change in his moral and spiritual life seems to be
implied in Christ's utterance which follows, "*This*
day is salvation come to this house, for he too is a
son of Abraham," not beyond the pale of God's
purpose of grace. And the golden argument is
clinched, the golden story is closed, with the golden
saying which is still precious beyond most things
even in the Gospels, "the Son of Man is come to
seek and to save that which was lost."

The radiance of the story throws a side-light on
two things at least.

(a) It shows in vivid and concrete reality *what it* **Reconcilia-**
means for a soul to be reconciled to God. **tion and Life** Dr Denney
in his great book, *The Christian Doctrine of Recon-*
ciliation, takes the case of Zacchaeus as one typical
instance of what reconciliation means in actual
experience. Speaking of the vow of Zacchaeus, he
says, "There is no boast in this. . . . It is the new
man who speaks here, and who reveals in this
regenerate utterance what the coming of Jesus
meant for him. Salvation came to his house when
Jesus entered it. He brought with Him the power

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix.
1-10.

which reconciled Zacchaeus to God, and in the very same act or process delivered him from his old sin of covetousness, and made him a new creature. This experience is not separable from the sinner's reconciliation : it is part and parcel of it, and is the visible proof that it is real." These deep words are well worth pondering. Perhaps we sometimes speak of reconciliation to God as if it were an arbitrary transaction, magically wrought, and having no vital relation to the new life which follows upon it. This is an error in thinking which may easily lead to errors in practice. To be reconciled to God's will is a vital element in our being reconciled to God Himself. And it was when He saw a new and nobler purpose asserting itself in the soul of Zacchaeus, that our Lord declared salvation to have come to his house—a salvation which may involve much more than a new attitude to life and duty but which has that new attitude for one of its most significant and evidential results.

The Messiah
of the Lost.

(b) The story throws a light also on *our Lord's conception of His own Messiahship* and what in it most constrained His heart. Has He given us any more appealing word to account for His own presence in this world than this great saying, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"—*to seek* with tireless patience, with inexhaustible ingenuity, with loving care, and *to save* with a gracious might which can take the veriest outsider, despised by his neighbours and himself, and set him among the children of Abraham? With that word *lost* we are back in the atmosphere of

Zacchaeus

chapter xv. The conception is now taken out of the **Luke xix.** realm of parable and applied to an actual human **1-10.** case—a man who had a home and a business in Jericho. Professor J. A. Robertson tells us that in all the New Testament there is no word so surcharged with emotion as this word *lost*. “And its full significance is surely missed unless it is recognised that into the consciousness of Him who used it had come the throbbing of the pain of separation in the heart of God, yearning over the wandering race He made for Himself.” It mattered greatly to Jesus that Zacchaeus should be a sinner against God and an outsider from the commonwealth of Israel: it was a large part of what He saw in His own Messiahship—that He had been sent of God to bring such wanderers home at any cost. Can we believe that it matters to Him still that souls should wander and forget? Can we believe that He is still the Seeker and the Saviour—patient and eager in His seeking, tender and mighty in His saving, now as in the days of old?

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

What is my soul, thought I, among such an innumerable multitude of beings? And this troubled me greatly, “Perhaps the Lord will take no notice of me.” I was perplexed thus for some time, but at last a text of Scripture, very apposite to the case, occurred to my mind, and put an end to the doubt—*The Lord knoweth them that are His.*

. *Autobiography of John Newton*

LXXV

THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

“ And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant : because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin : For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man : thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow : Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury ? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given ; and from him that hath not, even that he

The Parable of the Pounds

hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."—LUKE xix. 11-27.

It is impossible to read this parable without being continually reminded of the parable of the talents, both by resemblance and by contrast. The resemblances are very striking. In each case the master goes away on a journey. In each case three servants, out of those left behind to trade, have to give account of their stewardship. In each case there is one disloyal servant in the group, who adds to his offence by accusing his master of a hard and grasping temperament—the Greek adjectives of accusation are different but the meaning is practically the same. On the other hand, the differences are almost equally remarkable. Here all the servants get the same sum to trade with, not varying amounts as in the other case. Further, that amount is a "pound"—a comparatively small sum as compared with the "talents" of the other parable: the talents are apparently a division of the nobleman's capital—the pound is a small sum given to test the quality of the servant. And perhaps the greatest difference is the introduction here of a hostile outer ring: this nobleman has all the greater need of loyalty and devotion within his own household because he has to confront so much enmity from beyond it. "His citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." Is this merely the parable of the talents slightly altered and added to?

Luke xix.
11-27.
Parables
compared.

The answer to the question lies in a slightly wider

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix.
11-27.

survey¹. There are three Gospel parables on "Work and Wages in the Kingdom of God." There is the parable of the *talents* (Matt. xxv. 14-30). There is the parable of the *pence* (Matt. xx. 1-16). And there is the parable of the *pounds* here. In each case there is a real though subtle difference of standpoint. The parable of the talents tells of unequal endowments. This parable of the pounds tells of equal endowments which are used with unequal diligence. And the parable of the pence tells of those whose opportunities are unequal, and who are not allowed to be the losers through circumstances over which they have no control. When the parables are summed up so, one feels that here is no mere accidental resemblance or variation: here is a very far-reaching philosophy, carefully worked out in picture form, of toil and recompense in the Kingdom of heaven.

We must confine our attention to the parable now before us.

Time for the
Task.

1. *The Master has gone away: there is time to trade.* "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and to return." Was this suggested by the case of Archelaus, who had gone to Rome upon such an errand, and who, as it happened, had had the unpleasant experience hinted at in v. 14—the message of an unwilling people sent after him? It is conceivable that the germ of the parable may have been so supplied, but

¹ I am indebted here to Dr A. B. Bruce's skilful analysis: it is impossible to work in this field without feeling oneself in debt to him at every point.

The Parable of the Pounds

this is a parable, not a history, and it is the disciple- **Luke xix**
heart, rather than the mind of the antiquarian, that **11-27.**
knows how to read it. The point is that there is
time to trade before the Master returns. To go to
“a far country” takes time. “To receive for him-
self a kingdom” takes time. There is time even in
the Master’s absence to settle down to the tasks of
life. Did He foresee the restlessness which might
creep into His Church, which actually did creep into
some parts of it? “The Lord direct your hearts
into the love of God,” Paul prayed for his Thessa-
lonian readers, “and into the patience of Christ.”
Then he turned his prayer into sober and sensible
counsel. “Now we command you, brethren, in the
name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw
yourselves from every brother that walketh dis-
orderly. . . . For even when we were with you,
this we commanded you that, if any would not
work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there
are some which walk among you disorderly, working
not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are
such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus
Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their
own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-
doing.” Perhaps these words of St Paul are the
best commentary upon the first motive of this
parable. That spirit of a somewhat restless and
fussy impatience had shown itself even before the
Master had gone. “He spake a parable because He
was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought
that the Kingdom of God should immediately
appear.” There was work to be done, and there

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix. 11-27. was time to settle down to it. The best preparation for the Master's coming again was the faithful, loyal, and fruitful performance of the tasks He had left behind.

The Hour
of the
Reckoning.

2. *The Master will come back : the time will pass.* To go into a far country, to receive a kingdom, to return—it all takes time. Yet even far-off events have a relentless way of drawing nearer, and there are mornings when we open our windows to find that the far-off events have arrived and that the world is changed. "It came to pass that . . . he was returned, having received the kingdom": the deliberate days may have leaden feet, but at last they reach this point. We cannot conceal from ourselves in the light of nineteen centuries of experience that the divine plan was much more deliberate than the Church of the first days at all realised. The Church still waits and looks and works, happy if she can still keep her loins girt and her lamps burning. It is difficult to illustrate or enforce the swiftness of the advent except on the individual scale, and on that scale the swiftness sometimes seems appalling: as life goes on, one feels oneself caught more and more in a great current that moves ever more rapidly to the final plunge. Every student knows how when he is preparing for an examination, it seems far away when it is three months ahead: there is time for postponement, distraction, a little more folding of the hands to sleep. When the months shorten to weeks, the weeks go rapidly. When the weeks shorten to days, the days go madly. And one day the hour of the great event strikes, and the student

The Parable of the Pounds

goes irrevocably into the examination hall, ready or **Luke xix.**
unready according to the use he has made of the **11-27.**
days that slipped so easily through his fingers. Even
so does life pass on with increasing momentum, until
it passes out into a reckoning which none of us can
escape. "Lord, make me to know mine end, and
the measure of my days, what it is: that I may
know how frail I am."

3. *When the Master has His final account with His servants, diligence does not go unrewarded.* It looks **The Justice of the Master**
as though the recompense in the parable were carefully graded in its very expression. To the first, "Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." Here are praise and honour together. To the second, "Be thou also over five cities." Here is honour, but no outstanding praise: perhaps we are to understand that this man, though he has done well, might have done better. In both cases the form the honour takes is new and enlarged responsibility—a doctrine of reward which is not sordid but bracing. The thing that shines through it all is our Lord's great faith in the ultimate justice that rules the world. Apparently He had no doubt of that. In the three parables of wages and recompense He has three times affirmed it, each time from a different angle. Men may have different endowments, but the final award will be just. Men may have different opportunities, but the final award will be just. Men may differ in their energy and diligence, but the final award will be just. The world in His day was not a place that was justly ruled—yet He

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix.
11-27.

believed in this final issue. The surface aspect of the world in our own time does not suggest a place where justice is on the throne, yet would He not have us hold to the same belief through all appearances? "Help Thou our unbelief."

A Sullen
Heart.

Here, as in the parable of the talents, the figure which most draws our eyes is that of the wicked servant who brings his pound laid up in a napkin—unused and without increase. In St Matthew there is a more apparent motive than here—the third man's portion was small compared with the others: he may have felt wronged or slighted in receiving one talent when others were receiving two or five. Some, it is true, have been able to get over that difficulty by the help of the Divine grace, like the man Dr Samuel Johnson wrote of:

"His virtues walked their narrow round,
Nor made a pause, nor left a void:
And sure th' Eternal Master found
The single talent well employed."

In the case now before us the man's inaction is not so easily explained. "I feared thee because thou art an austere man": that motive might have prompted a fevered and slavish obedience; it is difficult to see why it should be used as an encouragement to laziness. Had this man become infected by the hostile environment of the rebellious "citizens" and learned from them a mood which was partly fear and also partly hate? Or had he created his master in his own image, and begun to fear lest, in any case, even after he had done his best his master might be hard with him, even as he

The Parable of the Pounds

would be hard with any fellow-servant who came **Luke xix.** into his power? However his moral paralysis first **II-27.**

set in, he was caught in the net of his own logic. Was he afraid? Then fear might have led him to some sort of obedience, even if it were a less satisfactory offering than the obedience of love. As it was, his inaction was pure rebellion. There are people in the world of this kind. To them the thought of God is a troublesome thought—a shadow on the horizon, an interference with the liberty of life. Yet it does not lead them to obedience. It seems only to produce defiance. John Ruskin¹ has told us in burning words what the meaning of the parable is—"heard with ears unbesotted": it is that we treat God as we never would treat the sternest of human exactors of interest. "*You*, among hard and unjust men, yet suffer their claim to the return of what they never gave; you suffer *them* to reap where they have not strawed. But to Me, the Just Lord of your Life—Whose is the breath in your nostrils, Whose the fire in your blood, Who gave you light and thought, and the fruit of earth and the dew of heaven—to Me, of all this gift, will you return no fruit but only the dust of your bodies and the wreck of your souls?"

The parable ends with a hard law: "Unto every **A Just Law** one which hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him." Yet it is not so hard in experience as it is in sound. You must put something into life if you are going to get anything out of it. Unless

¹ *Fors Clavigera*, Letter liii.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix. we put something into the Church and Kingdom of
11-27. God—some devotion, some service, some enthusiasm
—we shall get nothing out of the great enterprise of
the ages. If we do put something into it, it will
return to us an hundredfold. *To him that hath*
—the hearing ear, let us say—is there any limit to
his education? *To him that hath* the surrendered
heart—is there any limit to his sanctity? *To him*
that hath the loyal will and steadfast purpose—is
there any limit to the fruitfulness which he may lay
at the Master's feet? The Lord we serve is a just
Lord, and His justice is no small part of His love.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;
for they rest from their *labours*. Blessed only
they: for where there is no labour, spending
life's capacity for God, there is, of course, no
rest.

Horace Bushnell

LXXVI

THY KING COMETH

“ And when He had thus spoken He went before, ascending up to Jernsalem. And it came to pass, when He was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, Saying, Go ye into the village over against you ; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat : loose him, and bring him hither. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him ? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt ? And they said, The Lord hath need of him. And they brought him to Jesus : and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen ; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord : peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Thy disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” —LUKE
ix. 28 44.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix.
28-44.

An Acted
Parable.

OUR Lord, upon occasion, did not disdain the dramatic method, the method of the acted parable, which had been used by some of the prophets who went before Him. And on this day of His final approach to Jerusalem there was a dramatic deliberateness in His action, as though He set Himself to fulfil certain ancient hopes and promises. We are quite content to see the working of the Spirit of God in the close resemblance between His life and passion and the marvellous picture of the suffering Servant in Isaiah liii. ; yet we feel that He Himself may have grown into that resemblance almost unconsciously, being led towards it a little at a time by His own instincts of pity and patience—He was instinctively a sin-bearer, and by all the leadings of His own heart He identified Himself with the people He came to help and save. But in the scene we are studying now there was a curiously deliberate purpose, as of one who issues a manifesto. There was an ancient prophecy which ran along such lines and He would set Himself to act it out. It might be that, even at the eleventh hour, men might identify Him by the resemblance, and not only identify Him but accept Him, knowing Who He was and why He had come. So all the arrangements with the owner of the ass's colt had been carefully made to enable the programme to be carried out to the letter: Zechariah's hope must be embodied in life and action before the eyes of Israel.

What is wrong with this world that no joy in it ever seems to be unspoiled? In this alone there might be a proof that this is in some sense a fallen

Thy King Cometh

world—twisted in its character, gone astray from its **Luke xix.**
high destiny. Roses have thorns. Winter lingers in **28-44.**
the lap of spring. The sunshine even of the brightest
gladness is ever haunted by shadows. We may
analyse this scene along such lines and watch first
the sheer joy of it and then the sadness which invades
the joy.

1. We watch the Master, mounted on His lowly **Joyful**
steed, climbing the eastern slope of the Mount of **Welcome.**
Olives, then rounding the shoulder of the hill,
towards the western side. He found Himself sud-
denly in a scene of exuberant, almost frantic glad-
ness. It was the Passover season when the city
could not nearly contain all its visitors: they
crowded adjacent suburbs like Bethany: they
encamped in tents upon Olivet.¹ And many of the
people were Galileans, less prim and artificial than
the inhabitants of the capital—Galileans who had
seen in their own region, or had heard of, the
wonderful works of Jesus, and rejoiced to hail a
prophet who was one of themselves. They let them-
selves go. They gave Him a royal progress. They
spread their garments in the way as for a king and
a conqueror. "Blessed be the King that cometh in
the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory
in the highest."

It is here, amid this spontaneous outburst of **The Problem**
of Popu-

¹ It has been suggested that the allusion in Psalm cxxxiii. to the
ointment upon Aaron's beard, running down to the skirts of his
garments, and to the dew of Hermon, the dew that descended
upon the mountains of Zion, is a picture of the streaming lines
of tents which at this season flowed down the very slopes round
which our Lord was riding.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix.
28-44

rustic gladness, as much as on the remote Mount of Transfiguration, that we would like to build tabernacles and compel the Master to abide. But the difficulty of that is that the joy itself does not abide. Even if we could not see round the shoulder of the hill, nor tell where the miles are taking us, we might guess that the joy will not last—at least in this external, exuberant form. There is a rhythmic law in human emotions: gladness is a tide—it flows and ebbs, and flood-tide does not stay. But we do see round the shoulder of the hill, and we do know where the miles are taking us, and we cannot forget that our Lord, even in the midst of the Hosannas, was on the way to His crucifixion. So even this momentary happiness sets all sorts of strange questions stirring. There is the problem of *the psychology of the crowd*. Even if we do not take the extreme view that those who cried “Hosanna” at the beginning of the week cried “Crucify” before the end of it—why, when the city crowd did cry “Crucify,” was this country crowd so silent, so invisible, so helpless? Is Amiel right? “A crowd is a material force, and the support of numbers gives a proposition the force of law; but that wise and ripened temper of mind which takes everything into account, and therefore tends to truth, is never engendered by the impetuosity of the masses.” Can it be that even those shouts of Hosanna were very largely physical emotion—as we might put it in modern phrase, a letting off of steam? And for “the wise and ripened judgment which tends to truth” was it necessary to look elsewhere than in

Thy King Cometh

the crowd—to little groups and solitary souls ? That **Luke xix.** problem raises another—the whole problem of *popu-* **28-44.** *larity*. At the beginning of our Lord's ministry, the common people heard Him gladly. Then came, apparently, a decline in popularity : many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Now for the moment He seems to be popular again : "all the city was moved," one of the other Gospels says. Popularity is a strange thing. It is as much subject to the law of ebb and flow as is the human emotion which supports it. Ten years after Wordsworth's death, Lord Macaulay set about the gathering of funds to erect a national monument to the poet. The response was disappointingly slow and small, and Macaulay declared that if he had only started ten years sooner he could have collected as much money in Cambridge alone as he could now gather from the whole of England. So in ten years a great poet's popularity may dwindle, but how rapid is the ebb of this popularity of Passion week which gives the Christ this great ovation, and in a few short days leaves Him naked and lonely upon His Cross ! Perhaps then the thing to admire, even in the brighter side of the scene, is not the shouting multitude but the quiet, steadfast figure of the Master riding in lowly guise upon His appointed way. Popularity does not excite Him. Loneliness when it comes will not deflect Him from His path. He is Master of circumstance and of Himself.

2. The darker side, then, has entered already. It **A Saviour's** enters plainly enough with the sour-faced Pharisees : **Sorrow.** their decorum is shocked : "Master, rebuke Thy

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix.
28-44.

disciples." Perhaps beneath a shocked decorum even deeper and baser feelings are stirred, envy, malice, jealousy cruel as the grave. "Envy," says Jeremy Taylor, "is the parent of unmercifulness," and in the envy and jealousy of those grudging hearts were the unholy fires in which nails and spear were forged. Yet the sadder side of the scene enters even more poignantly in the revelation given us by the evangelist of the thoughts and feelings of Christ Himself. The noisy scene falls suddenly silent to let us hear those dropping tears, those words of compassion. The city lay before Him, now in full view, the city of the saints, the city of the prophets and the psalmists, the city of storied hopes and golden dreams. He saw the drama of that city rushing on now to its desperate close, the shutting away of opportunities which had been neglected and despised, the coming of the doom towards which guilt and sin had been ripening. The Divine Love in its wrestle for human souls has sent many lovely signs and messages, but none lovelier than the tears of Jesus. The Divine Righteousness in its controversy with men has used many sharp and probing words, but none more penetrating than these: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace. . . . Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Irreparable
Loss.

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman forces is only one part of the weight of meaning in our Lord's words of doom. Other cities have sinned, but have not been visited by any rapid or external vengeance; yet it remains true that human life is

Thy King Cometh

a state of trial and training. Gradually—it need not Luke xix. come suddenly or dramatically, it may creep on 28-44. quietly like the slow ripening of the corn, gently like the westering of the sun—the trial and training reach their limit and the hour comes when the test is applied. Men's conceptions of doom and destiny may vary with the ages, but there is no getting away from the Master's sense that (as Dr J. H. Leckie puts it) "there is such a thing as the irreparable and the irrevocable, irretrievable loss, unavailing regret." That was where He saw Jerusalem standing in the moral landscape when He rounded the hill that day: He saw her on the edge of the irreparable, on the brink of the irretrievable. If one last cry could have called her back, surely these words of warning and pity would have availed to deliver her!

The shouting crowd on Olivet fades away, and we are left beside our Lord in a tragic world—a world That we might know whose occasional exuberance of joy cannot hide its essential tragedy. And if our hearts cannot withhold their admiration, say rather their adoration, from the Master Who through popularity or shame goes forward steadily to fulfil His task—they cannot withhold their pity from the blind souls of men who let the glory of their opportunity vanish, unapprehended and unemployed. "*Thou knewest not.*" We turn with a great thankfulness to Paul's contrasted words, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God that *we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*" If that be so with us, then, when the great cry goes forth, "Behold, thy King cometh unto

St Luke xviii.--xxiv.

Luke xix. 28-44. thee," we are not blind to His glory. Even His humility cannot hide His divinity, the call and the gift of God in Him. We give our lives to Him for His possession and pray that they may be His Kingdom for ever.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, Who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer

LXXVII

CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

" And He went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought ; Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer : but ye have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, And could not find what they might do : for all the people were very attentive to hear Him. And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon Him with the elders, And spake unto Him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest Thou these things ? or who is he that gave Thee this authority ? And He answered and said unto them, I will ask you one thing ; and answer Me : The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men ? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven ; He will say, Why then believed ye him not ? But and if we say, Of men ; all the people will stone us ; for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."—LUKE xix. 45—xx. 8.

THE triumphal entry once over, our Lord set Himself Luke xix. to make fruitful the few days or hours which were 45 ; xx. 8. left to Him. These verses give us a few rapid glimpses of Him as Reformer, as Teacher, as Controversialist, all within the courts of the Temple. Perhaps a deeper link than that of mere locality unites these happenings to one another and to the scene of

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix. triumph which preceded them. He had made His
45 ; xx. 8. formal and public proclamation of Messiahship ; and
now, in His various occupations, He was carrying
out His rôle : His proclamation of Himself was
being at point after point illustrated and confirmed.

The Zeal of
Thine House.

1. "He went into the Temple, and began to cast
out them that sold therein." A number of the best
MSS omit the following phrase, "and them that
bought." The reader must be referred to com-
mentaries with more space to spare, for a considera-
tion of the weighty problem as to whether there
were two cleansings of the Temple, or only one,
placed at the end of the ministry by the Synoptics,
apparently set at the beginning by St John. The
repetition of an act so dramatic and deliberate does
not seem in the abstract likely, but abstract theories
and concrete realities do not always correspond.
Those who count this the second cleansing point out
the difficulty of uprooting profitable abuses : they
are like weeds—mow them down and soon they
show their heads again, stronger than ever. Is it
a hint of the intensification of the evil that we read
in St John, "Make not My Father's house an house
of merchandise," but here the sterner and more
scorching words, "Ye have made it a den of
thieves" ? Be that as it may, we now see Him
return to that Temple where we saw Him before as
a Boy with wondering eyes. It was still His Father's
house, beloved and honourable. But His eyes saw
some unsavoury realities now which perhaps had not
broken in upon them in the earlier days—this
greedy, selfish, profiteering traffic, a convenience to

Christ in the Temple

the lazy, a source of revenue to the authorities, but Luke xix. a sore desecration of the sacred courts. Truly pious 45 ; xx. 8. and worshipful hearts could not tolerate such an invasion by sheer Mammon of the atmosphere of reverence and peace.

St Luke's account of this incident is much more **The Uplifted Scourge.** brief and bare than that of St Mark : perhaps, writing for Gentile readers, he did not count it of widespread interest. Yet even his brief mention of it is enough to stab our spirits awake to a side of Christ's spirit and mission to which we do not always do justice. Our Lord was the Prince of Peace and the Prince of Peacemakers ; but He was not a pacifist in the sense that He was willing to let evil have a quiet life and an unopposed triumph. So far as personal wrongs went, He was willing to carry out His own counsel of " the other cheek " and to give His cheek to the smiter. But so far as public justice is concerned, or the claim of His Father's righteousness, that Reforming Christ with uplifted scourge is anything but a lesson in Quietism. He knows how to take measures to carry out what is right, active even to the point of aggression. And there are occasions when His disciples have to follow Him, for the cleansing of God's abiding temple, for the sanitation and orderliness of human existence.

2. The cleansing was followed by the teaching. **Wisdom and Power.** " He taught daily in the Temple." The bringing of our attention to a focus upon that limited area makes vivid what indeed has been apparent enough wherever the sound of His message has gone—the way in which it inevitably works out as a savour of life unto life,

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix. 45; xx. 8. and also of death unto death. In the crowd that throngs the Temple courts, there is a division as soon as His voice is heard. There was a faction formed against Him, in which the most unlikely opposites were united by a common antagonism. "The chief priests,"—Sadducees, "and the scribes"—Pharisees, and "the chief of the people"—"the socially important," says Dr A. B. Bruce, "who, though laymen, agreed with the professionals in their dislike of Jesus." He taught—the holiest, divinest, most needful teaching which the world had ever received. St Matthew tells us that He not only taught but healed, showing love in act as well as in word: but "they sought to destroy Him," their own answer to so much wisdom and grace. Yet there was another side to the picture and another issue to the teaching. It is described in an unusually vivid phrase—"all the people hung upon Him, listening." One can see the eager eyes, the strained attitude, the hush of any noisy movement lest a word of the precious teaching should be lost. Jerusalem at this season was crowded with visitors from far and near. Some must have heard Him before and learned the worth of what He had to give; they might have used the modern lines, had they known them,

"From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again."

To others again He must have been a new discovery. But all felt the wisdom and the power that were there: they became the spiritual kinsfolk of Mary of Bethany: they hung upon Him—listening.

Christ in the Temple

That is an alluring phrase in the opening verse of Luke xix. chapter xx. which not only repeats that He “taught the people,” but adds that He “preached the Gospel.” If we transliterate the Greek rather than translate it, we get “He evangelised.” What would we not give for a record of those last evangelistic sermons? What did they contain? Did He tell all over again about the lost sheep, and the lost coin, and the lost son? Did He exhibit again—in the Temple!—the two men in the Temple, the Pharisee unevangelised and the Publican penitent and justified? Did He try to convey to His hearers, as He had already more than once tried to convey to His own disciples, some hints of the meaning of His approaching sacrifice? We have no details: we can only guess and wonder: but *He evangelised*. The criticism of Thomas Chalmers on Bishop Butler was that the latter had a heart “not thoroughly evangelised.” O great Evangelist!—Christ Who art at once the Preacher and the Theme!—take our hearts for the temple where Thou dost evangelise, and that thoroughly, till the cold altar burns and the worldliness and formality are consumed away!

3. After the teaching came controversy. It began on “one of those days, as He taught the people in the Temple.” It has been remarked that of scarcely any day in the life of Christ have we so full an account as of this day when so many controversies arose and so many questions were put. The day was not all spent in controversy: as we have seen, He found time to “evangelise.” But controversy was forced upon Him from various quarters. Con-

Luke xix. 45; xx. 8
Christ the Evangelist.

The Lord's Controversy.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix. 45 ; xx. 8. controversy is sometimes a necessity, but always a risky and unpleasant necessity. Tennyson once remarked to a friend that dew never fell after a windy night ; and after the fierce blasts of controversy the dry ground often waits in vain for the dew of blessing. But our Lord had to face it, as all must do who stir up the passions or prejudices of men.

They wanted to know about His authority. Farrar says that every Rabbi had his diploma, every priest his ordination : these men were always quoting their authorities : they would say nothing that was not, in some external sense or other, authorised. This Teacher from Galilee—had He His diploma ? Had any ordaining hands been laid upon Him ? Perhaps the question was a trap : they may have hoped that He would play into their hands by claiming to be the Messiah and saying His authority was that of their promised King. But He was not to be caught in their snare : He turned the controversial battle against them. “ I also will ask you a thing,” He said : perhaps it should be rendered “ will ask you for a statement ”—You are authoritative teachers of religion : be so good as to settle one point for us all. “ The baptism of John—was it from heaven, or of men ? ” The narrative almost shows us the clouds of doubt and fear shadowing their faces. From heaven ?—there was a chain of consequence starting from that admission : He will say, “ Why then believed ye him not ? ” It was doubly important that they should not take that line if the rumour was true that John had laid down his laurels at the feet of this Jesus Himself. “ Of men ? ” That was

Christ in the Temple

scarcely safe : the multitude had been deeply stirred Luke xix. by John, and had hailed him with eager gladness as 45 ; xx. 8 the first prophetic voice to break the silence of centuries. And here was this very multitude hanging upon the voice of Jesus as they had once hung upon the message of John. " If we say, Of men, all the people will stone us." So they, rather than decide so knotty a problem, abdicated their position as teachers in Israel. And our Lord, answering the silence of cowardice with the silence of rebuke, was left master of the situation.

The very mention of that word *authority* reminds us of the whole stormy zone which surrounds the seat of authority in religion. Perhaps the very sequence of this passage is a parable of the way in which our Lord often sets up His own authority in the hearts which He subdues to Himself. First, He *cleanses* : then, He *teaches*. It is His moral authority that makes itself first felt : the soul has its vision of that high purity and perfection in Him which makes it cry, " Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord," which after all makes it bid Him stay and cleanse His own temple for His own possession.

Then His intellectual authority follows, and He Who has first won the conscience wins and holds the intellect as well, satisfying it with truth most deep and fair about God and man and all the things that satisfy the questioning soul. We must ask Him therefore to cleanse our hearts to be His temple, and then to stay and teach in the temple He has cleansed. We shall not be afraid even of

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xix. the scourge of small cords if He follows it with the
45 ; xx. 8. healing and the sweetness of His Gospel. -

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Christ purged His Temple · so must thou thy
heart.

George Herbert

LXXVIII

THE SERVANTS AND THE SON

“Then began He to speak to the people this parable ; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard : but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant : and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third : and they wounded him also, and east him out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do ? I will send my beloved son : it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir : come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them ? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. And He beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner ? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”—LUKE xx. 9-18.

THIS was apparently the last of our Lord's parables. Luke xx. He seems to have turned from the bickerings and 9-18. insincerities of the religious leaders to the larger and less sophisticated audience which was still within the sound of His voice. The story which He told begins abruptly, as if He were eager to plunge into His theme with the minimum of prelude. It was

The Last of
the Parables.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx.
9-18.

spoken in solemn urgency. It could not have been spoken without strong emotion. The very intensity of it, vibrant in every line, might be its sufficient defence against the line of criticism which some have taken—that this is a story written by a Christian of some later date—perhaps when the arguments of Stephen's speech were in the air, to account for the crucifixion of his Lord. It may be pointed out that all three Synoptics give the parable, and give it at this point in the history; and as Dr Denney wisely says, if a later Christian had written the story, he would not have left the Son dead upon the ground—he would have given some hint of the triumphant vindication, of the resurrection which so quickly became a part of the Church's faith and message. The parable palpably took shape before the Cross, and in anticipation of judgment to follow: any light upon its darkness springs not from the existing experience of the Church, but from the triumphant words of a psalm which had sung to an earlier generation the miracles of God's power and love.

The Story of
Israel.

1. It is *a short philosophy of the history of Israel*. "A certain man planted a vineyard and let it forth to husbandmen." Such a transaction was familiar—the rent being paid in kind, either on the basis of a fixed quantity of produce or of a quantity proportionate to the harvest. And when, as in this story, the owner was not upon the spot, but "went into a far country for a long time," those who rented the vineyard were in a special sense trustees, taking care of his property for him until he should send or come.

The Servants and the Son

This owner dealt patiently as well as punctually with **Luke xx.** those who farmed his vineyard. "At the season"—**9-18.** presumably the season when the grapes were ripe—"he sent a servant." As St Luke tells the story of the coming of the servants it gradually comes to its grim climax. The first one was beaten and sent away empty. The second was insulted as well as beaten. The third was wounded, and not only sent away empty but violently cast out. But our Lord was not thinking of an ordinary vineyard and ordinary messengers. He was thinking of Israel and the prophets of God. We sometimes speak of Israel as the chosen nation, and we use the phrase so habitually and so lightly that it savours of cant. But it is more than a mere phrase: it sums up vast tracts of history and experience. What shall we say of a people into whose life came a Moses, a Samuel, an Elijah, an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, a John the Baptist? What other nation had the like? The religious teaching and training which Israel had for many generations enjoyed—were not these the signs of the Divine choice, the Divine care, and the Divine expectation? These things were great honour for Israel, but in God's plan honour and responsibility always go together. Was our Lord too severe in His parabolic summary of Israel's behaviour towards her prophets and her privileges? It scarcely seems so as we turn the pages of the Old Testament, and see how one messenger of God was insulted,¹ another stoned,² another imprisoned,³ and many slain.⁴ So

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 24.

³ Jer. xxxvii. 15.

² 2 Chron. xxiv. 21.

⁴ 1 Kings xviii. 13

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx. 9-18. God had dealt with man, so His people had dealt with the messengers of their God, until the hour struck for His last and greatest effort.

Servants and Son. 2. For the parable is also *a glimpse into God's increasing purpose*. The owner of the vineyard "sent a servant. . . . Again he sent another servant. . . . Again he sent a third." Then he fell into a soliloquy. "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him, when they see him." Dare we call this a Divine soliloquy? We are for the moment entangled in the framework of the story which, being a story, must needs be told after the manner of men. Perhaps we cannot in cold blood attribute to Almighty bewilderment or disappointment or limitation of resource. Yet the earthly story has a Divine meaning, and if anything could move Almighty God either to bewilderment or despair it would be the behaviour of the men He has made in His own image, who use His best gifts so strangely and so poorly respond to His love and patience. Meantime, in whatever picture forms we may express the movements or the delays of His purpose, that moves on to its climax. The great hour strikes. The time of mere servants is over and that of the Son has arrived.

How he
viewed
Himself.

3. And yet further the parable is *a glimpse into our Lord's view of His own person*. Perhaps it is the one of His parables which comes nearest to being an autobiography. We saw that the story of the Temptation was a fragment of autobiography—autobiography in the light of life's fundamental visions. This parable is a fragment of autobio-

The Servant and the Son

graphy also—of autobiography in the light of life's **Luke xx.** bitter experiences. Theologians have told us much 9-18.

in recent decades about what, in their learned way, they call "the self-consciousness of Jesus." They mean by that His whole way of looking at Himself and feeling about Himself: it is not so much something that He deliberately described, as a deeper something underlying all His thoughts and words. Of this fundamental assumption of His in regard to Himself the Gospels are each and all an unfolding. It emerges not in one or two verses here and there, but continually. If it is temporarily hidden it emerges again before we are aware. But this parable, as some one says, is "the summit of the peak." Never was His own position clearer to Himself. Never did He set Himself more definitely to make it plain to others. No mere servant but the Son! It was either very madness, or very truth.

One thing we must not miss. The end of the parable makes it plain enough. *Our Lord knew—* **Our Lord's Pre-vision** and He wanted His enemies to know that He knew—*what men were plotting against Him.* How skilfully the parable is pointed to carry that home! "When the husbandmen saw him they reasoned among themselves"—is this a reflection of the situation described in the end of the previous chapter, when the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him but were puzzled what to do?—"they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir; come, let us kill him." He knew, then, and now they knew that He knew. There is a sudden change in the tense of the verbs

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx
9-18.

which corresponds with the leaping of this thought to light. So far the story has been told in the past tense. "A certain husbandman planted a vineyard. . . . He sent a servant. . . . They reasoned, saying, This is the heir. . . . They cast him out of the vineyard and killed him." But suddenly the parable breaks into a question, and the tense is future—"What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?" This after all was no mere story of the past, still less a figment of the artistic imagination. It was something going on. Its *dénouement* was at hand. God had still His part to play and He would have the last word upon it all. There is a strange saying in the Book of Ezekiel (xiv. 7): "Every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from Me and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning Me, *I the Lord will answer him by Myself.*" It is as though there were moments in life when God seems to brush aside all intermediaries, that He may act for Himself and speak for Himself. Such a moment surely came to some of those men of evil purpose in Jerusalem, plotting against the Christ, when His clear eyes turned upon them, and they knew that He knew. Such an hour came to Israel in the turning of God's purpose towards the Gentile world—His answer to the unbelief, prejudice, and narrow-heartedness of the chosen race, the giving of the vineyard to other husbandmen. It is not safe to play with the living God.

The Servant and the Son

What shall we say of a world in which such things **Luke xx.**
can happen—such things as the fate of the servants, 9-18.
such things as the slaying of the Son? We can **A World Out**
only judge that there is something strangely wrong **of Joint.**
with such a world: it is somehow out of joint with
the purposes of its Creator. If we look back into the
paragraph before this, for a glimpse of the com-
munity of which this parable was spoken, the thing
that seems mainly to be wrong is insincerity. But
Dr A. B. Bruce with true ethical insight points out
how near insincerity often is to brutality: “press
insincerity a little and the politeness gives place to
rudeness: press it still more and rudeness in word
gives place to rudeness in act.” They began—these
leaders of Israel—by clothing themselves with false-
hood as with a garment: they ended by slaying the
Prince of Life. Yet even in face of their malignity
the Master knew that the purpose of God was greater
and mightier than they. Old words came to Him—
the triumphant word of the Psalmist about the stone
rejected of the builders, the stern word of the prophet
about the stone cut without hands that smote the
image and scattered its fragments as chaff. *He shall
come*—He said of the Owner of the Vineyard, the
God Whose mercies to those who trusted Him,
Whose judgments to those who opposed Him, could
not fail. Florence Nightingale’s favourite adjective
for God was “inexorable.” We need that thought
sometimes. He is long-suffering. Yet He is inexorable
also, and only an inexorable God in such a world
as this can carry through His purpose to its climax
and crown His Rejected with glory and honour.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx.
9-18.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Nothing is great if it costs only a word. But it is clearer than daylight now, O man, what an outlay He has made for you. From the Lord He became a servant; from rich He became poor; from the word, flesh; from the Son of God, the Son of Man.

Bernard of Clairvaux

LXXIX

CAESAR AND GOD

“And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on Him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that He had spoken this parable against them. And they watched Him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor. And they asked Him, saying, Master, we know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest Thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar or no? But He perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar’s. And He said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s. And they could not take hold of His words before the people: and they marvelled at His answer, and held their peace.”—LUKE xx. 19-26.

It is small wonder that fresh controversy arose after Luke xx. the utterance of a parable so pointed and personal 19-26. as that which we have just studied. But possibly Watching Enemies. the incident now before us may send its roots even farther back than the parable—as far back as the preceding controversy about authority. Christ had then confronted His critics with a dilemma: “the baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?” They avoided the two horns of that dilemma only by finding a very uneasy resting-place in silence.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx.
19-26.

Now they would confront Him also with a dilemma : He had nearly caught them—now let Him see if He could Himself escape ! The story is a strange revelation, not only of the malice but of the craft and hypocrisy with which Christ's steps were pursued. "They watched" — the verb is absolute, they watched not Him only but circumstances and opportunities, "watching their chance," Dr Moffatt renders it—"they watched and sent forth spies, which should pretend to be honest, in order to seize on some word of His, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the Governor." St Matthew adds the curious detail that some of those who went out on this hypocritical errand were "disciples" of the Pharisees, perhaps young or obscure persons, not likely to be recognised as emissaries of the official clique. They may have had ingenuous faces, but the poison of asps was under their lips.

They opened their game with flattery. "Master, we know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest Thou the person of any"—Thou art not swayed by partiality—"but teachest the way of God in truth." It was a fine testimonial if it had been a sincere one : the trap was skilfully laid and was baited well. Many of Christ's servants have fallen, like Christian and Hopeful, into the snare of the flatterer. But though poor pilgrims have often fallen into such a trap, the Lord of the Way was wiser. He Who was the Truth saw through flattery and falsity, and white robes could not conceal from Him black hearts.

Caesar and God

The dilemma they brought for His undoing was a **Luke xx.** question of old debate: "Is it lawful for us to give **19-26.** tribute unto Caesar or not?" In the days of the **Question and** Roman occupation it was a test at once of patriotism **Reply.** and of orthodoxy. But this time it received an unexpected and original answer. "He perceived their craft"—St Mark has "hypocrisy," St Matthew "wickedness," "each evangelist has his own word here," Dr A. B. Bruce says, "as if trying to describe the indescribable." "He perceived their craft, and said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? Shew Me a denarius." "Shilling" would be a nearer equivalent in our vocabulary than "penny." There upon it was Caesar's image and superscription plain and clear. Caesar's writ in that form was running in their land. Caesar's wealth, by that token, was fertilising their commerce. "And He said unto them, Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's." The plot had failed, and the Master's verdict had been more complete than they expected or desired. "They could not take hold of His words before the people, and they marvelled at His answer and held their peace." The incident, like many things in the Gospels, throws a light far beyond itself. It stands for all time as a short philosophy of Christian citizenship.

1. *Caesar has his place*—Caesar as typifying the **Caesar's** form of government which any age or any race may **Claim.** find best for its own purpose. It was Caesar then; it may be a constitutional monarchy to-day, or an unrelieved democracy to-morrow or the day after;

St Luke xvii'.—xxiv.

Luke xx.
19-26.

from our Lord's standpoint that mattered little—He did not deal in political programmes nor was He a builder or a breaker of constitutions for earthly kingdoms. Indeed, there is something about Christianity so finely irrelevant to all external systems that it has proved its power of survival under many forms of government, under very different orders of society : monarchy or republic, absolutism or democracy, it has flourished in them all. But in whatever social structure he is called upon to live, the Christian will not forget his duty as a citizen. It may be a part of his Christian citizenship to pay his taxes cheerfully. It may be another part of the same obligation—that he will take an interest in the problems and needs of his community and do his utmost to lift it nearer to the ideal state. And he will find ways and means of showing his loyalty and gratitude to the community, whoever its figure-head may be, by whatever constitution it may be bound together, in which and by which he himself lives. In that sense Caesar still makes great claims, and honourable men still pay their debts to Caesar.

God's Claim

2. But *God too has His place* and His claim. Man's vision of his obligation sometimes stops short of that, so short-sighted is man and so narrow-hearted. And when our Lord bade these Jews render unto God the things that were God's, He was not merely uttering a reminder as to the Temple tax : He was hinting at something far bigger and deeper, which might be forgotten even by some who professed to be very religious, the offering of the heart and soul. In modern as in ancient days there are many who

Caesar and God

are living in a world without a sky because they are Luke xx. forgetting this higher obligation. They may know a 19-26. great deal about ethics, about economics, about citizenship; but God is not in all their thoughts. Then or now, such a life is tragically incomplete—starved and darkened for lack of Him Who claims the soul for His own possession and Who is alone able to satisfy its deepest loyalties.

For the moment, there was no conflict between the one allegiance and the other. Our Lord found no incompatibility in His own day between a full-hearted loyalty to His Heavenly Father and an acquiescence in Caesar's temporal jurisdiction: from that jurisdiction, as Harnack points out, "He never withdrew His own person." But circumstances sometimes alter cases, and before the Church had been very long in existence, a sore conflict arose over this very point. The Caesars became infected with the insane love of homage: it was demanded that the subjects of Caesar should worship him; and for a Christian that test was crucial—he must either worship Caesar and so deny his Lord, or else he must be loyal to his Lord and seem to be disloyal to Caesar. The agony of that situation throbs like a burning pain through the Apocalypse of St John. If there is a conflict between the two jurisdictions, God and the things of God must come first: even Caesar cannot be His rival. That lesson learned in those early days has often been learned again, in days of persecution when cruel kings and intolerant governments have tried to force men into unacceptable creeds and forms of worship. But God has giver

The Clash
of Claims.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx. His servants grace to put Him first—to submit their
19-26. bodies to Caesar indeed, though it were to the sword or the stake, but not to submit their souls and consciences. Caesar's throne has its place and it is a great place, and those who serve God will serve Caesar and help him gladly within the limit of his rights. But when he oversteps that limit, he must be told to keep his place: there is a higher throne to which Caesar is but a subject, and if not a subject an enemy.

The Penny This passage has always been a favourite with
of the Soul. mystical interpreters. They have found in the soul rendered to God a coin stamped with His image and likeness and therefore a nobler parallel to the denarius that is yielded to Caesar. Tertullian was one of the first to start this line of interpretation: "give to Caesar what is Caesar's—his image on the coin: give to God what is God's—His image in man, yourself." Johann Tauler has a great sermon embodying the same thought. "This image and superscription lies in the inmost inmost of the soul, whither God only cometh and where He delights to dwell. He therefore that would be truly united to God must dedicate the penny of his soul, with all its faculties, to God alone, and join it unto Him." This perhaps is scarcely exegesis, yet it enshrines one of the profoundest of truths. If we are indeed to render unto God what is His, is not our debt unpaid till we have yielded our very selves, which He has made for Himself? Give Caesar his denarius—that will satisfy his claim. But God says, "My son, give Me thine heart."

Caesar and God

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Luke xx.
19-26.

Render therefore to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour.

St Paul on the things that are Caesar's

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

St Paul on the things that are God's

LXXX

THE GOD OF THE LIVING

"Then came to Him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked Him, Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him."—LUKE xx. 27-38.

Luke xx.
27-38.
Two Ways
with a
Big Theme.

Two opposite types of mentality meet in this incident—the type which handles a theme and leaves it small and trivial, the type which, handling the same theme, leaves it larger than before, with windows opening out of it into eternal reality. In some hands any subject, even the greatest, is made to seem trivial: such minds may see some of its surface aspects, may make little notes upon its

The God of the Living

minutiae, may pursue it into side issues. Richard **Luke xx.** Baxter says that, when he was young, he used to ²⁷⁻³⁸ live upon the twigs of the tree of truth, the curious controversies and marginal matters. When he was older and wiser he came inwards towards the trunk of the tree, the greater things, central and fundamental. But some souls never seem to reach that stage: they remain among the twigs and upon the margins to the end. In wiser hands, even a comparatively small theme may reveal great meanings: they so handle the temporal that it breaks open and reveals the eternal: and the theme when they leave it is on a loftier level than when they take it up. The Sadducees in this encounter took the great theme of immortality, and made it little: our Lord took it out of their hands and made it great.

It is possible that the problem of the seven brothers and the one wife afforded a frequent and well-known theme for discussion, though debate on such a point must have been about as unpractical and unprofitable as the famous discussion of the schoolmen as to the number of angels which could stand on the point of a needle. The introduction of the topic may have been a deliberate *reductio ad absurdum* of a doctrine which the Sadducees disliked, with perhaps the faint hope of involving our Lord in the ridicule aroused. The custom alluded to was based upon an old law in Israel. "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall . . . take her to him to wife" (Deut. xxv. 5). The custom seems to have

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx.
27-38

existed in other countries too, such as Arabia : among the Jews it is said to have fallen out of use by our Lord's time. Even if it were still occasionally observed, so extreme a case as this was not in the least likely to occur. But the supposititious case provided the Sadducees with their conundrum : they put their question and awaited the Master's reply.

That reply included two elements—a statement about the life to come, and an illustration to confirm that statement from an unexpected source.

The Life
beyond
Birth and
Death

1. Our Lord makes one of His rare statements about the life to come. Why, when men are often so athirst for information on this theme, our Lord gave so little information we do not know : perhaps human speech has not descriptive power for such a task, nor human thought the necessary capacity. If we lived in a two-dimension world, it may be that we could not understand such a three-dimension life as that with which we are at present familiar : it could not even be described to us. And perhaps just as little can we, who inhabit now a three-dimension world, understand a world of another order altogether in which time and space are no more. Be that as it may, our Lord for the moment trusts human speech to convey His hearers at least a little way towards the truth. "The children of this world marry and are given in marriage ; but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead"—on that point He was frankly opposed to the Sadducees—"neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Neither

The God of the Living

can they die any more"—the whole scheme of Luke xx. mortal arrangements, birth and death and what lies 27-38.

between, is left behind: "for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Is there any link of thought between this passage and the phrase in Romans i. 4, "declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead"? St Paul there speaks of the One: our Lord is here dealing with the many, yet the thought seems the same. The Son of God, the sons of God—they are all children of the resurrection. In what finer or more convincing way can sonship be shown forth than this—that mortality should be swallowed up of life—

"Triumphing over death, and chance, and thee, O Time"?

"They neither marry nor are given in marriage . . . for they are equal unto the angels." Does this abolition of the mortal scheme of things look like a transference from solid realities to unsubstantial shadows? Perhaps when we reach it we shall find that it is rather a transference from the shadow to the substance, and that being "equal unto the angels" is more, not less, complete than our earthly temporary lot. That seems to be Browning's view in the *Ring and the Book*. Pompilia is speaking, the pure and lovely soul caught in the net of a cruel and loveless marriage, love awakened only in a form which puts it in this life beyond her reach.

The Passing
and the
Permanent.

"In heaven we have the real and true and sure.

'Tis there they neither marry nor are given

In marriage but are as the angels: right,

Oh, how right that is, how like Jesus Christ

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx.
27-38.

To say that! Marriage-making for the earth
With gold so much—birth, power, repute so much,
Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of these!
Be as the angels rather, who, apart,
Know themselves into one."

For the moment we are caught in the earthly scheme. It has its thrilling joys, its poignant sorrows. It has its opportunities of discipline and education. But it passes: it is bound to pass. Its machinery runs down: its scenery tumbles about our ears. And if we catch the Master's meaning here, we pray to be counted worthy to transcend these temporary shadows, and to reach the realities of which we can scarcely dream, much less speak, but which are hidden in the hand of God for them that love Him.

God and His
Saints.

2. Our Lord adds a scriptural instance to confirm His position. He refers His hearers to the passage about the Bush. If a modern speaker were to allude to "the Shepherd Psalm" or the "No-condemnation, no-separation chapter," it would not be hard for the average hearer to recognise the passage referred to. So the section on the Bush was very familiar, a well-known synagogue lesson. Perhaps it would not occur to us that in such a passage there was any message regarding the future life: yet our Lord read with an insight more penetrative than ours. It was something to confront these Sadducees with the message of a book which even they held sacred. But He was in pursuit of something greater than a mere dialectical victory. He had the vision, which He would share with them, of a profound spiritual truth. His answer to the Sadducees comes to this,

The God of the Living

Dr Rendel Harris says :¹ " You are inconsistent in Luke xx. denying the future life ; you ought first to have 27-38. denied the being of God ; but as long as He is—beat His saints small as the dust, scatter them to the four corners of the earth, yet He will send forth His angels and gather His elect again from the four winds, and lo ! they are sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God."

Such an argument need not have surprised our Lord's hearers ; and it need not surprise us. As Dr A. B. Davidson points out,² it is the argument of all Old Testament saints and of the Psalms. " What they postulate from fellowship with God is *life*. . . . What their words and their faith require is not an immortality of the soul ; such a thing would have sounded strange to them. They know of persons only, not souls ; and their faith demanded the life of the whole person." Probably it would be fair to say that this was our Lord's outlook too. Resurrection was uppermost in the question that was put to Him : in His reply *life* is uppermost, and resurrection is only a detail of mode and mechanism. The essential thing is the continuance of personality, with all that is needed to make it complete.

This message of Christ has illimitable comfort in Living unto Thee. a world where life is so shadowed by mortality : the quibbles of the Sadducees may be forgiven them since they elicited so sublime a declaration. " He is not a God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him." And Canon Ellerton's familiar

¹ See *Memoranda Sacra*, p. 3 f.

² *Old Testament Theology*, p. 448.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx. hymn voices the instructed response of believing
27-38. hearts throughout the ages—

“God of the living, in Whose eyes
Unveiled Thy whole creation lies,
All souls are thine; we must not say
That those are dead who pass away;
From this our world of flesh set free,
We know them living unto Thee.”

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; or our own comrades and friends who have vanished within the veil—the truth is not that He *was* but that He *is* their God: therefore He cannot leave them in the dust nor suffer them to be extinguished like brief candles in the night. When the Master said this to His hearers long ago, certain of the scribes answered, “Master, Thou hast well said.” And after that they durst not ask Him any question at all. And when He says it to us, we are almost ashamed to ask for more, however much we should like to know, for here is the foundation of every hope and the essence of every promise.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

The *I am* of God involves the *I shall be* of the creature.

J. Rendel Harris

Because I know the spark
Of God has no eclipse,
Now death and I embark
And sail into the dark
With laughter on our lips.

Joseph M. Plunkett

LXXXI

DAVID'S SON AND DAVID'S LORD

"Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, Thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask Him any question at all. And He said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's Son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth Him Lord, how is He then his Son?"—LUKE xx. 39-44.

IF Christ's enemies were for the moment silenced, Luke xx. He was not silenced Himself. It was again His turn 39-44. to take the initiative. And He pressed upon His hearers a question which must have arisen out of His own brooding upon the Messianic passages of the Old Testament. We have already seen, and shall yet see, how some of those passages had twined themselves round His soul—the passage about Him Who was anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor, or the passages which foretold how the Christ must suffer and enter into His glory. He had been a student of Psalm cx. also, and He had brought a problem from it to press upon the hearts of those who professed to be waiting for Messiah's Kingdom.

"He said unto them, How say they?"—St Matthew turns it into the second person, addressing the

Christ in a Psalm.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv

Luke xx.
39-44.

Pharisees, St Mark has "how say the scribes?" But the detail is unimportant: it was a common dogma among teachers or taught—"How say they that the Christ is David's Son?" He had no desire to repudiate that dogma, but He would carry the point a stage farther and higher. "David himself saith in the Book of Psalms"—St Luke makes the reference plain for his Gentile readers: the other evangelists have "in the spirit" or "in the Holy Ghost"—"the Lord said unto my Lord"—two words in Hebrew, Jehovah to Adonai—"Sit thou on My right hand until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet." "David therefore calleth Him Lord: how then is He his Son?" The point which our Lord seems to be urging is that there are some things greater than mere physical descent: there is an authority so august and holy that before it even kings must bow. We are in danger of treading here upon very unhistorical ground if we imagine Him deliberately deciding upon questions of criticism which were not then in the atmosphere at all. It is about as difficult to imagine His mind being invaded by modern scientific problems of relativity or the constitution of the atom. Such questions are settled not by authority but by the ordinary slow processes of human knowledge and research. The point which was relevant to the moment and of interest to Himself was the need of getting the idea of Messiahship upon the right lines. It has not been better summed up than in the words of Dr A. B. Bruce: "Think out the idea of Lordship and see where it will lead you. The scribes began

David's Son and David's Lord

at the wrong end, at the physical and material, and **Luke xx.**
it landed them in secularity." The point at which **39-44.**
they began was that of physical descent, and it left
them with a worldly and external view of Messiah's
Kingdom. Had they begun where Christ wanted
them to begin with the idea of Lordship, a moral
and spiritual sovereignty, then they had not lost
themselves among the externalities: they would
have seen their true King standing before them.

The whole conception of Messiahship is one of the **Man's need**
most haunting and pathetic things in history. On **of Ruling.**
its human side it started out of a grievous dis-
appointment—the disillusionment of a nation as to
the kings that were. They might be the Lord's
anointed; yet often their shoulders were not strong
enough to bear their burden, nor their characters
clean enough to keep their crown and sceptre un-
tarnished. King after king came to the throne,
little wiser than a child, often almost as cruel as a
beast. But the great hope which had been kindled
seemed only strengthened by many disappointments,
—that some day there should come the very King
of God's own sending, a terror to evil-doers, a shelter
to the weak and helpless, perfect in wisdom and in
righteousness. That haunting persistent hope is a
strange tribute to man's need of ruling—to his
instinctive knowledge of the fact that he will never
be right until he is rightly governed. That happy
state could never come until One should appear Who
did not reign by mere force but by inherent lord-
ship—the holiness that would subdue men's con-
sciences and the loving-kindness that would awaken

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx. 39-44. their love. Because our Lord had this, He was willing to let the outward conquest go : as St John tells us, " When Jesus perceived that they would come and take Him by force to make Him a King, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone." But from those who hailed Him as Lord and Saviour He did not depart : when He saw their loyal and awakened souls, He knew that His Kingdom was real after all.

Prince and
People.

It is one of the misfortunes of this passage that, among the controversies which it has stirred, the psalm which lies behind it has almost been forgotten. There is a Royal Portrait in it, dim and broken perhaps as in some old tapestry faded and tattered by time, yet sufficiently complete to be intelligible. The Hero-king of the poem is seen first enthroned—at God's right hand by God's right hand, " The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou at My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Then we look again and see that He is not only King but Priest, wearing the white robes of an office which to the Hebrew mind was diviner even than the kingship, the office in which two worlds met and touched—" the Lord hath sworn and will not repent : thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Yet He does not cease to be a warrior, He confronts His enemies : they fall before Him : His conquests seem to have no limit. For the last touch in the portrait is in some ways the most vivid of all : he is finally seen not enthroned and at His ease but striding on to fresh discovery and fresh victory : " He shall drink of the brook in the way"—He has

David's Son and David's Lord

His own secrets of refreshment and renewal—"there- Luke xx. fore shall He lift up the head"; there is no droop or 39-44. drag about this last glimpse of the Conquering One: there are yet greater things before Him, and He goes on His way undaunted and undepressed. There is one other lovely thing in the psalm which should not be missed as the New Testament reader turns back to it. There is a portrait not only of the King but of His people. The Hebrew is obscure and difficult, and probably its true translation is something like this: "Thy people are free-will offerings in the day of thine army"—volunteers, not pressed men, rallying to the royal standard in an obedience which is perfect liberty. Further, "in the beauties of holiness they come," wearing a livery almost as stainless and resplendent as the white raiment of their Leader, men with a clean record and a clean conscience. And yet further, "from the womb of the morning thy youth are as the dew unto thee"—as the morning dew sparkles on the myriad blades of grass, so this host of young and eager and dedicated lives shines and sparkles before the eyes of their Chief—the freshness of their purpose not yet worn off, the eagerness of their enthusiasm still bright and clear. To such a King, such a people!

It was in this picture that Christ discovered Himself. And happy are the souls who, not in picture or symbol merely, but in free choice and living experience, find Him to be Lord and King.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx
39-44.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

How doth Christ execute the office of a King? Christ executeth the office of a King in subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.

The Shorter Catechism

LXXXII

WIDOWS' HOUSES AND A WIDOW'S MITE

"Then in the audience of all the people He said unto His disciples, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts ; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers : the same shall receive greater damnation. And He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all : For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God : but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."—LUKE xx. 45—xxi. 4.

IT might be a good preparation for the study of Luke xx. these verses to read again the parable of the judge 45—xxi. 4. and the widow in chapter xviii. : "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man ; and there was a widow in that city." It would be a reminder of the selfishness and greed, of the rascality and rapacity of some souls that walk this earth ; a reminder also of the helpless and defenceless condition of others, of whom the widow is typical, against the proud and strong. Once more we are brought into contact with the proud and greedy, and with the weak and helpless. Is it accidental that these two sets of verses should be in

A Glimpse
of the
Helpless.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx. conjunction, separated only by the late and artificial
45—xxi. 4. chapter-division—the verses which tell of those who
devoured widows' houses and those which describe
the offering of the widows' mites? It is suggestive
that St Mark is like St Luke in giving both in the
same sequence and close connection.

The Great
Woe.

1. Our Lord's Woe upon the scribes, as the evangelist gives it here, is but a fragment of the longer and more detailed indictment given in St Matt. xxiii. The enemies of God and goodness in those days had more than one glimpse of the eyes which were like a flame of fire, more than one encounter with the message which was like a sharp two-edged sword. By that contact many hearts were searched, but it must have been doubly terrible when, as here, the encounter took place before a crowd of witnesses. "Then in the audience of all the people, He said unto His disciples"—the people many of whom knew full well how true were His accusations. It must have been a foretaste of the last Assize.

"Beware of the scribes," He said. There was, then, selfishness, rascality, rapacity even in religious circles. When Christ was judge, judgment began at the House of God. In this matter the Lord of the Prophets was Himself in the prophetic succession and in the prophetic spirit. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," said Amos in the name of his God, "*therefore* I will punish you for all your iniquities." The logic of that message was original—not so did the gods of the nations speak to their devotees—but it was piercing and convincing. And it found its confirmation in the

Widows' Houses and a Widow's Mite

bearing and teaching of Jesus Christ. Had He loved **Luke xx.** Israel less, had He expected less of her, He had not **45—xxi. 4.** censured her religious leaders so strongly.

“Beware of the scribes! They like to walk about **Degrees of Damnation.** in long robes, they are fond of getting saluted in the market-places, of securing the front seats in the synagogues and the best places at banquets; they prey upon the property of widows and offer long unreal prayers.” This is Dr Moffatt’s translation, and the phrase, “They like to walk about” exactly brings out what Dr A. B. Bruce calls the “childish pleasure” taken by the scribes in their apparel and position and dignity. They may have been very solemn about it all, but they had the strut of children who liked playing the principal parts in the pageant of Jerusalem. But in the strange amalgam of human nature, childishness and cruelty often go together, and they went together here. There is no definition of the sense in which those men “devoured widows’ houses.” Amos told of those in his day who “sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes,” selling up, sometimes for “a mere song,” those whom misfortune had landed in debt. That may be the shade of meaning here, or the allusion may be to the amount of hospitality exacted and received by religious leaders from pious but foolish women, eloquent prayers being sometimes the bait to catch the benefactions. Either way, the picture is an unlovely one. There are degrees even in damnation, as Dante and all the moralists have seen. And for those who cover the loathsomeness of their self-seeking and greed with the veneer of piety, there

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx. shall be "greater damnation," because in the sight
45—xxi. 4. of their Judge, and with the consent of the whole
moral universe, their sin is exceptionally damnable.

Great Giving. 2. It is a relief to turn from these men and their
ugly ways to the immortal picture given in the
opening verses of chapter xxi. Is there any tale told
in the Gospels which has given more constant help
and encouragement to the poor and the despised in
the family of Christ? "He looked up, and saw the
rich men casting their gifts into the treasury"—the
thirteen trumpet-shaped receptacles standing in the
Court of the Women, each with its label indicating
the purpose of the offerings it received, very much
as there might be boxes in a modern cathedral
labelled "For the poor," "For the upkeep of the
fabric," "For the Clergy Fund," and what not.
"And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in
thither two mites." The precise value of the coins
matters little: the sum is said to have been the
smallest offering which was legally permitted. Oh,
those eyes of His! a moment ago fierce as flames of
fire, now full of appreciation and tenderness, but
always watchful, penetrative, just! No one else
would have thought the widow worth looking at.
No collectors with long subscription-lists thought it
worth their while to call upon her. No subservient
Temple official rubbed his hands with pleasure when
he saw her approach. There was no parade about
her as there may quite well have been about some
of those who preceded and followed her. But the
Master had His own perspective and His own arith-
metic—an arithmetic not taught in the schools of

Widows' Houses and a Widow's Mite

Vanity Fair nor practised in the markets of Babylon, Luke xx. yet as valid in its own sphere as the doctrine that 45—xxi. 4. two and two make four. "Of a truth I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast in more than all these"—one can imagine the wave of His hand towards some of the more ostentatious givers who, though they may not have known it at the time, were weighed by His glance and found wanting. "For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God; but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

The principles of the political economy of the Kingdom of Heaven are found in strange places; some of them we might pick up in the Poor Man's Market of Isaiah lv.: others we might gather here, where the widow drops her timid farthing into the Treasury of God. And once we have learned the lessons we dare not forget them—the first that men are accepted not for what they possess but for what they desire—Mr Desires awake was a very prince when he went shopping in Poor Man's Market; and the second—that an offering is valued not by the quantity of its contents but by the quality of its faith and love—this poor widow was a Queen in God's House because her little gift was a big sacrifice. "She out of her penury hath cast in." The word is a strong one. It is the same as Paul uses in writing to the Philippians, when, among his prison hardships, he said, "Not that I speak in respect of *want*." It might almost be rendered *deficit*. Some people, perpetually haunted by what Vanity Fair might count a deficit, seem to be surpassing rich.

Wealth in
Penury.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xx. “As unknown and yet well known; as dying and
45—xxi. 4. behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as
sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making
many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing
all things.”

The scribes devoured widows' houses, but Christ made the widow's gift immortal with His praise. It is time to sing *Magnificat* again. Mary may lead in tones surpassing sweet, but the widow's quavering voice takes up the strain, and the voices of a great multitude who have seen the glory of the justice of Christ. “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.”

FOR MEDITATION AND THANKSGIVING

The story of Jesus is the story of the poor and forgotten. . . . Every one who has walked in sadness because his destiny has not fitted his aspirations; . . . every humblest creature in the obscurity of great cities or remote hamlets, who silently does his or her duty without recognition—all these turn to Jesus and find themselves in Him.

Mark Rutherford

LXXXIII

THE DOOM OF TEMPLE AND CITY

“ And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And they asked Him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be ? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass ? And He said, Take heed that ye be not deceived : for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ ; and the time draweth near : go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified : for these things must first come to pass ; but the end is not by and by. Then said He unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences ; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer : For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends ; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains ; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out ; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days ! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”
—LUKE xxi. 5-24.

Luke xxi.
5-24.

Glimpses of
the Future.

ONCE more we find ourselves in an apocalyptic zone of teaching. It is better to be honest and to confess that, for the commentator as for the ordinary reader, passages of this kind present extraordinary difficulties. It is partly that the apocalyptic vein of thought is foreign to us : the research of recent decades has taught us how much the apocalyptic speech and imagery were in the very atmosphere of our Lord's day : they are not in our atmosphere and it is difficult for us to acclimatise ourselves to them. There is further the fact that critical difficulties are here specially acute : it seems as if material on two themes had become intermingled : it is often difficult to be dogmatic in deciding whether a particular verse is meant to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem or to an event greater by far than any city's siege and fall. We are inclined in studying such a passage to be in the mood of Francis Thompson :

“ I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds ;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity :
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.”

Yet it is intrinsically probable that in these last days and hours of our Lord's ministry, the prophetic

The Doom of Temple and City

impulse was strong within His soul, and the prophetic vocabulary much upon His lips. We can only take the record as we find it here, and pray for help to hold fast the spirit of the message even if the letter is sometimes puzzling. On the whole vv. 5-24 seem to refer to the fall of Jerusalem, vv. 25-36 to the final Advent.

"Some spake of the Temple." St Mark is more explicit, and tells us that it happened as Jesus was leaving the Temple, and that one of His own disciples was the spokesman. "And they asked Him." Again St Mark is more precise, and mentions Peter and James and John and Andrew, the place of conversation being the slopes of the Mount of Olives, from which the Temple lay full in view. Seen from its own courts or from a greater distance it was a wonderful sight, a mass of marble and gold, with columns over forty feet high: Tacitus praised its "immense opulence" and a Jew was not likely to be behind a heathen in admiring its splendours. These included "gifts," such as Herod's golden vine, which added beauty and variety to the massiveness and seeming permanence. Startling to any beholder must have been the Master's sudden and tremendous prophecy, "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." But it must have been doubly startling to the disciple circle, who doubtless by this time were beginning to think of a Messianic Kingdom centring in Jerusalem, with their beloved Master enthroned as King. To tell them of the impermanence of the

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxi. Temple was almost as startling as to tell them that
5-24. the great globe itself was about to dissolve and leave not a wrack behind. No wonder they came to Him, when He and they had crossed the Kidron and had reached a quiet spot, and asked Him, saying, "Master, when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?"

It may be well to run over the chief points in His reply before eliciting the permanent lessons.

A Defence
against Fear.

The question as to the *when* He does not definitely answer. His aim is not to gratify curiosity as to dates, but to fortify the hearts of His disciples against fear and to comfort them against confusion and dismay. The programme-makers have toiled laboriously amid the Biblical prophecies, but a "haunting sense of unsoundness" pervades all their work. The Master Himself, whose clear eyes saw much farther than those of any other, refused to be a programme-maker, and taught His disciples to live by faith, not by dates. Certain things must be. False Christs (v. 8) would come. "Wars and unsettlements" (v. 9) would arise. The phrase in v. 10, "Then said He unto them," suggests a pause and a new beginning in the conversation, in which He led them more deeply into the sombre theme—nation rising against nation, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, portents in the sky. Besides these general matters, there were some others that had a more direct bearing on their own work for His cause. We have noticed in an earlier chapter that, if an advent belongs to the thought of Christ, it was He also Who taught His disciples about a *delayed*

The Doom of Temple and City

advent. That note also is here. The thought of Luke xxi. v. 9, "the end is not immediately," is taken up 5-24. again in v. 12, "*Before all these things*, they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you." It is curious that in this connection St Luke, the evangelist of the Gentiles, omits the phrase about the Gospel first being published to all nations. But he adds, "It shall turn to you for a testimony"—as if the Master had seen the cloud on the faces of His disciples, and had hastened to add something that might turn discouragement into hope and enable them to follow a thread of meaning even through the darkest experiences. The phrase may mean, "It shall turn to your credit," or "It shall turn into an opportunity for your witness." This latter seems the more likely shade of meaning, since the message runs on into a counsel on the behaviour of Christian disciples before earthly tribunals. It was a vast responsibility for simple men to be confronted with human principalities and powers and to know that they held not only their own lives in their hands but the truth which had been entrusted to their care. Even into such a task they were to go quietly and trustfully—"for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Amazing words, but not without historical justification!—let it be remembered how strangely ready the early Christian witnesses—from Peter and John, bold to face the Jews, to a Perpetua, answered "from the horns of the wild oxen"—were to face their emergencies, because nothing seemed able to sunder them from the fellowship of their Lord. Then

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxi. 5-24. follows perhaps the most startling paradox of the New Testament, "Ye shall be betrayed . . . some of you shall they cause to be put to death . . . ye shall be hated . . . *but there shall not an hair of your head perish.*" This last was probably a proverbial expression for complete security, but its use here shows the danger of a too literal interpretation of symbolic language. Through the most searching, straining, destructive experiences the real man could not perish. As the Fourth Gospel has it, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Or as we have it here in one memorable phrase, "In your patience ye shall win your souls." Then in the closing verses of the section the horizon clears to let us see Jerusalem in her hour of doom. Christ's hearers might not believe Him, but He saw and believed and knew. He sees, and lets us see, the gathering armies bringing desolation with them; the hurried flight for safety; the greater horrors which might fall to the lot of those who crowded into the city from the country, horrors for mothers and children—how like Christ to mention them specially!—and for the whole guilty people the fulfilment of all prophecies of doom. "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles"—their day of opportunity, for they shall have their day, even as the Jews had—"be fulfilled."

Sure Foundations.

It was all a warning and a preparation for men who lived at a certain time, and to whose lives a

The Doom of Temple and City

certain crisis was drawing near. But one or two Luke xxi. foundation things are here, which abide independent 5-24. of time or place.

1. *Our Lord is sure that whatever opposes His Kingdom is doomed.* It may be a temple—it may be any other institution or custom long established and greatly honoured; but if it stands in the path of God's increasing purpose, "there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." The last word in permanence is not with artistic beauty, nor with popular approval, nor even with physical massiveness: there is only one kingdom that is an everlasting kingdom and one dominion that endureth throughout all generations.

2. *Our Lord is sure that, whatever comes, the patient trustful soul can afford to be an optimist.* Beneath the mighty tossing waves of the sea, there is quiet water a few feet down; and beneath all the Master's descriptions here of tumult, confusion, and disaster, we feel the presence of a peace and trust which He possesses Himself and which He would share with His disciples. They emerge to the surface in such an amazing declaration as that of v. 18, "There shall not an hair of your head perish." There are two kinds of patience in the New Testament. One has been defined by Dr Plummer as "patience of injuries without paying back": the other is "endurance of suffering without giving way." The latter is the patience of this passage. The Master knew it would be worth while. He would not have pointed them to so hard a road unless He had seen a shining goal.

3. *Our Lord is sure that, whatever happens in the*

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxi. 5-24 *welter of circumstance, personality is the thing that matters.* This is a profound saying, somewhat remote from the more hackneyed ways of religious thinking, "In your patience ye shall win your souls." Dr Inge in his lectures on Personal Idealism and Mysticism warns the modern reader that our ideas on personality are too hard and fast. Personality is scarcely the fixed quantity that we suppose it to be. If we will go back to the teaching of Christ we shall find that while in one sense personality is already ours, in another sense we have to gain it, to acquire it in patience. And the way to "gain" it is to "lose" it—"to forget ourselves entirely, to cease to revolve round our own selfish interests, to pass out freely into the great life of the world, constructing our universe on a Christo-centric, or cosmo-centric, basis, not a self-centred one." That was the hard task on which, amid the heaving and crashing of an ending dispensation, the disciples were bidden to set forth. And still, when life's restlessness breaks forth again, and the world rocks and trembles, that may be our task also. It is an ancient lesson but never out of date: "the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Remember God hath said concerning everything, except only the unshaken things of the Kingdom of Christ—God hath said of them, "Once more" and they shall have an end. That mark is set upon everything but the things of Christ.

John Owen

LXXXIV

WATCH YE THEREFORE

“ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars ; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ; the sea and the waves roaring ; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth : for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads ; for your redemption draweth nigh. And He spake to them a parable ; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees ; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away : but My words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. And in the day time He was teaching in the temple ; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the temple, for to hear Him.”—LUKE xxi. 25–38.

So long as the apocalyptic vein continues, we are in **Luke xxi.**
a region where our deepest convictions and our **25–38.**
haunting uncertainties meet and touch. There is **The Coming**
something here that intertwines itself with funda- **Judge.**

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxi. 25-38 mental conviction, age-long as the Church's life: witness the Apostles' Creed, "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead": witness the greatest of all Christian hymns, "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge": witness the futile and unfinished look that history often wears, as if it were waiting for a new opening of the skies. If any one were inclined to handle such a passage as this in an irreverent, or even in a merely antiquarian way, he might well be solemnised by the august and amazing words set in the heart of it: "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My words shall not pass away." When we turn to details of interpretation, our difficulties begin. Verses 5-24, as we saw, are *mainly* concerned with the doom of Jerusalem: vv. 25-36 are *mainly* concerned with a greater Event than that, yet it is here that v. 32 comes in, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." Are we to hazard a guess at a misplacement of text? If so, it affects the other two Synoptics equally with St Luke. The difficulty is more than one of sequence and arrangement: it is difficult, as we have already noted, to think ourselves back into an intellectual environment in which the speech of apocalyptic was current coin. The Book of Enoch and similar works had shaped the popular vocabulary and a passage of this kind is more or less a mosaic of quotation and allusion. How much is to be taken literally, how much parabolically, only a very brave dogmatist would decide — though St Peter, in his handling of Joel on the Day of Pentecost, is our chief instructor in letting apoca-

Watch Ye Therefore

lyptic speech—"sun and moon and pillars of smoke" Luke **xxi**—fall like a shattered shell and holding fast the **25-38**. spiritual kernel of a prophecy. It may be well for our present purpose to hold to the spiritual values of such a passage as this, and to leave the details, whether textual or otherwise, to the critical commentaries—and to time.

What was apocalyptic, and what part did it play in the religious history of Israel? Shorn of the strange and weird imagery in which it delighted—signs in the sky, monsters in the deep and so on—its message had to do with the *reality of the divine intervention* in the affairs of men. In the days of persecution, days when evil men ruled and the ordinary processes of history were despaired of, the saints of God comforted themselves with such a message. So far as the Master used apocalyptic speech He is in that sequence, and that is His message also. There are certain things which are larger than any dubious detail of interpretation—things which have survived many temporary and inadequate interpretations: perhaps to see them illustrated in this passage will be the best clue to its deepest meaning.

1. *There is an apocalyptic, catastrophic element in history.* It is in the Bible because it is in history, for the Bible is close to life. There has been, and there may therefore yet be, much in man's strange story which might be expressed in the lurid imagery of vv. 25, 26—" . . . upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sounding of the sea and the surge, men's hearts failing them for fear": an instance is the fall of Tyre as described in Ezekiel

A Lesson
from History

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxi. 25-38 xxvii., which may have supplied one of the allusions here. That was the crash of a civilisation: the story of Jerusalem was soon to supply another: God has many judgment-days and there is nothing incredible about those which still belong to prophecy, because we are forced to believe in those which have already come in history. To state the matter more broadly, and to get behind all that is merely pictorial, history itself compels us to believe in that divine intervention which was the theme of the apocalyptic message. That is why apocalypse has still a message for us. We are familiar nowadays with the doctrine of evolution: we have got into the way of thinking that those are out of date who do not accept it. But perhaps we ought to be farther on than that: we ought to have learned that those are out of date who think that the doctrine of evolution can explain everything or that all history can be packed into its formula. There is evolution, but there is also cataclysm, catastrophe, overturning. The orderly growth of human institutions is shot through by the action of powers greater than man's puny will—powers which have their own way of passing judgment on the past and of bringing to birth a better future.

The Limits
of Evolution

“When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.” We may be glad and thankful that God thus sometimes takes things into His own hands, and answers His people's hopes “by terrible things in righteousness.” Our human processes are so slow: to aid them is right, but to be content with them might be the ultimate unbelief. Dr L. P.

Watch Ye Therefore

Jacks¹ has a suggestive essay in which he traces. Luke xxi. arising out of the acceptance of evolution, a kind of 25-38.

"cult of the slow and gradual" in human thought. We seem content to let things move as slowly as they please if only we think they are moving in the right direction. Our mere contentment with the "slow and gradual" is "the fruitful mother of tragedy." " 'Slowly and gradually' I discover my error, acknowledge my fault, and resolve after much deliberation to lay the offering of my penitence at the feet of him whom I have wronged. But when I arrive—great God! the blinds are drawn and the mourners are in the house. Too late! too late! . . . The cult of the slow and gradual! There is no cult in the world on whose altars so many victims have been slain. Are these the ways of God? Not always. 'As the lightning which lighteneth from the one part of heaven even unto the other, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man.' " This is true doctrine, and instances might be drawn from all history to illustrate it. If it has been so in the past, why should it not be so in the future? There is nothing either irrational or unlikely in the belief that history shall have a climax in which God, finally and forever, shall take things into His own hands.

2. In this apocalyptic element in history, *Jesus Christ is the centre and the Lord.* That is the whole ground-tone of this passage—the Jewish world, though it did not know it, was passing through one of its judgment days: judgment was being passed even then—the rest was but sentence and recom-

The Christ
Enthroned

¹ *From the Human End*, p. 40 f.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxi.
25-38.

pense. Men thought they were judging Jesus : He was really judging them : in the future that should be plainer still, so plain that no man could escape it. There is something amazing, overwhelming in the quiet confidence of these words : " Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory . . . watch ye therefore and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man." He was the centre of the scene, *then*, in the Temple Court, with the lurid clouds of judgment gathering round : He was to be the centre of the scene again, on a vaster stage, when all temporary and provisional judgments should be past and the last climax should unveil its splendours. Dr Moffatt,¹ dealing with the consoling influence of the apocalyptic hope upon men " amid conditions which intimidated and discouraged all but the most ardent souls on earth," discusses this very passage ; his words are worth all the more because he will not be suspected of any undue timidity either in doctrine or criticism. " This confidence in the power and goodness of God is bound up with the person of Jesus Christ. The eschatological hope anticipates a future in which the bliss and relief are mediated through the divine Christ : God is to reign over a people for whom Jesus has given His life as a ransom, for whom He has shed His blood, to bring them into the new relationship of sons to the Heavenly Father." At an earlier stage in our studies in this Gospel, the question was raised concerning Jesus of

¹ *The Theology of the Gospels*, p. 69.

Watch Ye Therefore

Nazareth—how far can His writ run? Even then Luke xxi we saw it reach beyond the death-bed and the bier. 25-38.

Now He seems to teach that it runs beyond the bounds of time and space, into the ultimate adjustments of history, into the final harvests of destiny. Great is His courage, when, from a teacher's quiet corner of the Temple Court, He claims a throne that shall outshine the stars.

The result for His followers should be on the one hand *a quiet confidence*. "Your redemption draweth nigh. . . . The Kingdom of God is nigh at hand." An Ethical Hope.

It were worth while to pass through many tribulations to come out ultimately into the glory of the new inheritance, with the Lord Christ, their Beloved, for its Ruler and Light. Their troubles might be tumultuous as the surge of the sea: but, as with the ocean waves, their bounds were set. On the other hand the issue should be *a loyal vigilance*. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life." The advent hope in the New Testament is consistently used to point an ethical lesson. The message of the divine intervention is never an excuse for idleness but always a motive for service—never an argument for carelessness, always a plea for the lit lamp and the girded loin. The charge is sometimes brought against the New Testament ethic that it is an interim-ethic, meant merely to bridge the gap to an Advent expected soon. But interim-ethic or not, it was so constructed as not to grow old with the passing centuries, and the lessons of sobriety, self-discipline, and vigilance

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxi. 25-38. which were taught to the Church of the first days are no less needful for us upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

With such solemn messages the last hours of our Lord's public ministry were filled. In the day-time He was teaching in the Temple. At night He went out and sought quietness on the Mount of Olives, during hours which we may guess were more filled with prayer than with sleep. And in the morning all the people came early to Him in the Temple to hear Him. They were eager to hear : He was eager to teach. They came early : He, as Dr Bruce points out, must have been early too. May the eager Master find us also to be eager listeners ! If we are eager, we shall not sleep as do others : we shall watch and be sober—until His footsteps quicken among the stars and the glory of the promised redemption rewards the eyes that have waited and the hearts that have prayed.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Watch and be sober : have patience to the Coming of the Lord. And in the meane while looke to thy lamp. The Lord poure of His golden oyle into it, and also into the vessell of thy soule. Keepe thy worke before thee, and be renewed in the spirit of thy minde. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.

*Letter from Bunyan's Church
to Sister Katherine Hustwhat*

LXXXV

THE FEAST OF DESIRE

“ Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill Him ; for they feared the people. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare ? And He said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water ; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples ? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished : there make ready. And they went, and found as He had said unto them : and they made ready the passover. And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer : For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves : For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.”—LUKE xxii. 1-18.

At this point the narrative perceptibly quickens its Luke xxii. pace : one has the same feeling in reading it as one 1-18.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 1-18. has in actual experience when, before some great crisis, the last hours speed fast. All the evangelists

The Hurrying Hours. are at one in giving large space to the story of the Passion: in the earlier parts of the narrative many things are omitted which we should like to know and many summarised which we should prefer to have fully, but here there is a wealth of detail. It is not mere morbid interest in a painful story: it is more even than loving recollection of the last hours of an honoured Friend: it is the sense of redemption, which supplies all the deepest music of the New Testament. The Gospel story is all a holy place: but we enter the Holy of Holies now.

“Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.” Strictly speaking these were two feasts, not one—the Feast of the Passover coming on the 14th Nisan, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread following from the 15th to the 21st; but coming so closely they were for practical purposes one festival. The stage so set begins quickly to fill with its main actors—the chief priests and scribes (v. 2) with their fear of the multitude and their greater hate and spite towards the Master; Judas Iscariot (v. 3) being—as the disciples could never forget, it seemed to shadow and shame the whole company—“of the number of the twelve.” “Then entered Satan into Judas.” We must not turn the vivid Eastern way of speaking into hard-and-fast psychology, though, by the way, even psychology is beginning to speak of the invasion or penetration of personality: we are not meant to understand that the will of Judas was overborne:

The Feast of Desire

it was enough that he, out of false motives and base passions, was the instrument of the typically diabolical crime of history. "And he went his way and communed with the chief priests and captains"—the heads of the Temple watch, who must help with the arrest—"how he might betray Him unto them. And they were glad"—one can see sinister smiles on crafty faces and hands rubbed in glee: this simplified their plans and smoothed their path!—"and covenanted to give him money. And he promised,"

"His honour rooted in dishonour stood
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true,"

"he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude."

Matters of such profound import are waiting that perhaps it is not needful to dwell at length upon the external preparations for celebrating the Feast—a plan of operations which was probably devised by the Master's quiet wisdom to baffle the purpose of Judas until the appointed hour should strike. St Luke gives the initiative to Christ Himself, and also mentions Peter and John: "He sent" them. And as they go, the narrative is so plain and clear that we can imaginatively follow them—entering the city, receiving their appointed signal, following the pitcher-bearer to the house, greeting the householder with the appointed message. The phrase "The Master saith" suggests that the man must have been a disciple; his name is not recorded, but perhaps it is well that his house is buried in oblivion as complete as that of its owner, otherwise the remembrance of

The Master's
Plan.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. Christendom might have turned in a kind of idolatry
1-18. towards walls that sheltered a scene so holy. Though all was so carefully arranged, there was nothing unusual or surprising in the plan : Jerusalem was full of strangers at that season, and nothing was more frequent than for a group of such pilgrims to make arrangements to celebrate the Passover, according to the ancient law of their race.

Yet the external preparations fade before the revelation which vv. 15 and 16 give us into the heart and hope of our Lord.

A Glimpse
into His
Heart.

1. "With desire I have desired"—a Hebraism for "I have earnestly desired"—"to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." It is a fascinating glimpse into the thought and feeling of our Lord. His actions as well as His words expressed this desire—the little embassy sent before to make the preparations, the careful arrangement with the host about the guest-chamber, the evident thinking-out of every detail : it manifestly meant much to the Master that He should have this last hour with His disciples undisturbed. Why did He look forward to it so eagerly ?

Perhaps in part for *His own sake*. That grows upon us as we study the phrase "before I suffer." He knew what awaited Him, and He wanted the strengthening alike of human sympathy—"to eat this Passover *with you*"—and of the divine encouragement. The Passover was a great historic message of encouragement. It brought with it memories of fetters riven and seas divided : it linked past and present together and made the unity of

The Feast of Desire

history a unity of redemption. The God He needed **Luke xxii.** to stay His soul upon was a God Who could make **1-18.** His way in the sea of confusion and His path in the deep waters of mystery.

Perhaps He also desired this Passover in part for *the sake of His disciples*, the little company around Him, fearing, wondering, scarcely understanding either the shadow that overhung the soul of their Master or the love that seemed to be bracing itself for parting and for sacrifice. "Before I suffer," He said; and His suffering was to be in some measure their suffering too—a sore blow to their faith, the burial of their hope, the falling round them of the house which their love had built to be a shelter against winter and rough weather.

The divines of long ago used to make much of what they called God's prevenient grace—not the grace that comes after to heal men of their wounds but the grace that goes before to prepare them for their battles. That is the meaning of the familiar collect, "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour," and perhaps He desired that gathering in the Upper Room that He might be the messenger of God's prevenient grace in preparing and fortifying His disciples.

Yet there was something in our Lord's desire perhaps even deeper. "*This* Passover" was to be like no other Passover: this Passover was to usher in the fulfilment of all Passovers: this Passover was to mark the border-line between two dispensations. So quietly does a great spiritual crisis sometimes steal upon the hearts of men.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii.
1-18.

There seems no difference between
To-day and yesterday;
The forest glimmers just as green.
The garden's just as gay.
Yet something came and something went
Within the night's chill gloom:
An old rose fell, her fragrance spent.
A new rose burst in bloom."¹

And that night the petals of an old dispensation withered and fell: the beauty of the Divine Redemption burst into being. "This Passover": that was the rose that was ready to wither. "This cup is the new Covenant in My blood": this was the new rose which blossomed then to refresh a world with its fragrance. With desire He had desired it—to see such a birth-night as this, to leave in the hands of His disciples for all the ages so priceless a memory and so great a treasure.

The New
Song in the
Height.

2. His desire kindled into vision and hope. "I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." Opinions have differed as to the meaning of these words—some applying them to the Christian Eucharist, others to the festal glories of the world to come. Somehow it seems likeliest that, with the thought of His sufferings pressing heavily upon His heart, His gaze should be directed to the joy that was set before Him, the timeless, deathless recompense. In the little company around Him He saw only the front rank of His chosen: but behind and beyond them

¹ Charlotte Becker.

The Feast of Desire

"Multitudes—multitudes—stood up in bliss,
Made equal to the angels, glorious, fair;
With harps, palms, wedding-garments, kiss of peace.
And crowned and haloed hair.

Luke xxii.
1-18.

They sang a song, a new song in the height,
Harping with harps to Him who is strong and true,
They drank new wine, their eyes saw with new light,
Lo, all things were made new."¹

Were it only because His very sufferings are illumined
by so radiant a hope He is the most welcome guest
that any house or heart can contain. And when He
comes down the ages, asking again, "Where is the
guest-chamber?" ten thousand thousand hearts leap
to answer Him saying, "Here, Master, here."

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any
man hear My voice and open the door, I will
come in to him, and will sup with him and he
with Me.

The Letter to Laodicea

Thy opening and His entering are but one
moment.

Meister Eckhart

¹ Christina G. Rossetti.

LXXXVI

THE FEAST OF REMEMBRANCE

“ And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.”—LUKE xxii. 19, 20.

Luke xxii. It is fitting that a Devotional Commentary should
19, 20. linger reverently over these few sentences—St Luke’s
The Heart of record of the Feast which has become the focus of
Christian the Church’s most tender devotion. The persistence
Devotion. of this Feast has been one of the miracles of religious
history. It has taken many different forms, en-
shrined very antagonistic doctrines, been overlaid
with varying degrees of ceremonial splendour. But
it has survived : the bread and the cup, handed by
our Lord to the members of His little circle, were
passed on by them to their successors, and by one
generation to another, and by our fathers to our-
selves. And in spite of their long journey across the
ages, the gifts come to us with the Master’s touch
still resting like a benediction upon them. The
Upper Room enlarges itself, and multitudes press in
to testify that, when this simple Feast is spread,
they feel themselves nearer to their Lord than at

The Feast of Remembrance

other times. Time is annihilated here : Redeeming **Luke xxii.** Love authenticates itself ; and the Christ is known **19, 20.** in the breaking of the bread.

We should naturally have anticipated that in this limited area at least the thought of Christendom would be free from controversy and its belief free of uncertainty. It is saddening to find that it is not so. Doctrinally, some of the fiercest fights of history have taken place on this ground, between Roman Catholic and Reformed, Lutheran and Zwinglian, High Church and Low. And some of the uncertainties of the case are hinted at in the problem of the text of this passage in St Luke. For a full discussion, more learned commentaries must be consulted. It is enough to say here that one important manuscript, followed by a number of versions, omits from " which is given for you " in v. 19 to the end of v. 20. If that omission is granted, and even scholars so conservative as Westcott and Hort support it—then St Luke's account of the Last Supper ends with the words " This is My body," and in his sequence the cup (v. 17) comes before the bread. If, on the other hand, the complete text is retained—Dr Moffatt retains it in his translation—there seem to be two cups, one before and one after the bread. In that case, possibly the cup of v. 17 f. is one of the Paschal cups, of which several were passed round ; and then the rest of St Luke's narrative to the end of v. 20 is very closely parallel to St Paul's account in 1 Cor. xi.

Whichever way we take it, the essentials are **The Symbols of Love.** here—the broken bread, the poured-out wine, the

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 19, 20. Redeeming Love which found in these simple things its valid and congenial symbols. We come sometimes in life to a point at which words fail, where only action is adequate. Friendship seals itself with a clasp of the hand. A lover's words fail him and he puts into a kiss what he cannot speak. A toast at a banquet is the kind of dramatic action which may speak more than many words : it is often curiously impressive when it is linked with some immortal memory, or with the name of an absent friend, or with some cause that is dear. The momentary silence, the symbolic act simultaneously carried through, into these things a whole flood of thought and feeling pours itself. The thoughts and emotions of the Christian life have also their audible vocabulary—hymns, creeds, prayers, thanksgivings. Yet the Master found a key to unlock the deepest in the hearts of His own when He said, "This is My body, which is given for you : this do in remembrance of Me," and when He added, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." *This do !*—that action, rightly done, is worship, proclamation, reception, fellowship.

Himself in
the Symbols.

It is amazing how much of Himself our Lord has put into these simple symbols. The bread is broken : the wine is poured : it is enough for the kindled imagination of faith and love : Christ Himself comes upon the scene. How much He brings with Him when He comes ! He brings with Him *His holy Incarnation*, for He says, "This is My body : this is My blood." Body and blood—that is Incarnation. With these Symbols in our hands we cannot forget

The Feast of Remembrance

that the Word was made flesh. We see before us **Luke xxii.** real substances which represent a real Manhood—no **19, 20.** phantom free from mortal relationships but one Who in very deed took our nature and lived our life. He brings with Him *His Cross and Passion*, for the bread is broken, the wine is poured out. Unless we are blind indeed, we can see through these things the thorns, the nails, the spear, the self-surrender, the darkness of the desolation, the completeness of the sacrifice. The sacramental act is richer than speech : words, as if ashamed of their inadequacy, flee away. Who can describe Gethsemane or Calvary ? But in this way of the Master's appointment they live again before our eyes. He brings with Him *His Covenant* : "this cup is the new Covenant in My blood." A covenant is an agreement : it is something that brings people together. In the Bible story the covenant is the bond of friendship between heaven and earth. There had been an old one written in letters of flame : it had failed because man had failed to carry out his side of it : the prophets dreamed of a new one which should carry with it, in the reality of the divine grace and mercy, the secret of its own success. In the Upper Room our Lord told His disciples that it had indeed arrived ; and when the simple Feast is kept again, once more we accept the bond of friendship between heaven and our own souls and seal it with our grateful assent.

To show Christ thus entering the faith and love of His people through the sacramental gateway—is this to teach the doctrine of the Real Presence ? **The Presence for Faith and Love.** No and Yes—Yes, much more than No. The dogma

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 19, 20. of transubstantiation is foolish and needless: it belongs to a philosophy hopelessly outworn: it confuses the mind where all should be simple and clear. Yet, like many errors, it is the perversion of a truth, and it retains its grasp upon multitudes of Christian souls not because of its error but because of the truth which it blunders in expressing. There is a real presence, though not a localised or material presence, for faith and love: to faith and love and need Christ comes: from faith and love and need He cannot be kept away. The temporal and the eternal are ever two sides of one fact. That is the meaning of the famous saying attributed by some to our Lord, "Raise the stone and thou shalt find Me: cleave the wood and there am I." It is credible that He said that, for it was like Him to say such things: turn over the temporal and you will find the eternal behind it: split open the temporal and you will find the eternal within. That type of thinking is at its clearest and most intense in the sacramental feast. The broken bread, the poured-out wine—these things are as simple and familiar as they can well be, yet in them the temporal unveils the eternal. We look through them, and we see the Christ coming to meet us, the Incarnate Christ with His body and blood, the Atoning Christ with His body broken and His blood shed, the Christ of the Ages, bearing in His hands the covenant which makes all things new.

Wonderful Sacrament!—to be the drama and vehicle of so much. Yet more wonderful Saviour!—to Whom in this act of worshipful remembrance goes forth all our love and all our praise, as it was in the

The Feast of Remembrance

beginning, is now and ever shall be, until the table Luke xxii
is spread for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. 19, 20.

FOR MEDITATION AND THANKSGIVING

What Christ will be to you in time is set
forth in the bread and wine. What He will be
to you in eternity earth has no symbols to
declare.

Robert Rainy

LXXXVII

THE WARNINGS OF LOVE

“ But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goeth, as it was determined : but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed ! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them ; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so : but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger ; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth ? is not he that sitteth at meat ? but I am among you as He that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me ; That ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me. And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing ? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip : and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors : for the things concerning Me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough.”

LUKE xxii. 21-38.

The Warnings of Love

It is a melancholy descent to turn from the high Luke xxii thinking and pure desire of the Master, and from the 21-38. drama of redeeming love as set forth in the sacramental Supper, and confront the revelation of human peril and frailty which these following verses disclose. Candid Records. At least we may praise the candour of those who wrote the records, which must be a reflection of the candour of the disciples themselves. This alone gives one the feeling of historical trustworthiness: it also throws a re-assuring light on the historical reality of Him Who is the central Figure of the story. One so perfect could not have been the invention of men so imperfect, nor would those who sought to palm off a deception upon posterity with such realistic truth reveal themselves.

1. The sinister face of *Judas* first is seen. St Luke's The Traitor place for this detail is one of the unsolved problems of that night: the other synoptists place it before the institution of the feast: St Luke puts it after—was Judas then present even at the sacramental moment? However the versions may be reconciled, one would prefer to believe that he had gone out into the night, ere *that* bread was broken, *that* wine poured. This evangelist's version of the incident begins with an unusually strong "But," as if either the Master in speaking, or he in recording, were conscious of the tremendous contrast between the atmosphere of v. 20 and that of v. 21. Two hands met upon that table—the Hand which only existed to heal and bless, and the hand that sold for money a Friend so holy and tender. The problems of fate and free-will meet in every life, but nowhere so

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 21-28. visibly or with such tragic import as in the case of Judas. Fate and free-will meet here in v. 22 : they share the verse between them—into so narrow a space may they both be packed ! “ Truly the Son of Man goeth ”—goeth to His death—“ as it was determined, but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed.” It is suggestive that the fate in that verse Christ draws to Himself—He, the Lord of all, walks in the path marked out : the free-will of Judas is left to him : his in the last analysis is the evil choice, his therefore the woe and the shame. St Luke omits the appeal to the Master : “ Lord, is it I ? ” They discussed it “ among themselves ” : one can see the awed, frightened faces, can hear the whispered consultations—it was surely incredible that a disciple should “ do this thing.” But when sinful motive enters a human heart, even the incredible often becomes possible. Have mercy upon us, O Saviour, Thou Who knowest our lowest and our highest, and canst deliver us from the Judas who slumbers in us all.¹

An
Ambitious
Company

2. Next we see the *whole group* engaged in what was apparently a not uncommon wrangle, as to which of them should be the greatest : we have already had an instance in this very Gospel, ix. 46 f. Here in such an environment, at such an hour, it was doubly jarring and out of place. Had it arisen out of love and jealousy when the places were set for the supper—some one coveting the position next to the Master ? “ There was a strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest.” It is

¹ On Judas, see also Vol. I, p. 157 f.

The Warnings of Love

the comparative that is used, the greater : perhaps **Luke xxii.** we might render it ' the Superior,' thinking of one **21-38.** who in some society or fellowship is given authority over the rest. With infinite patience—it must have been a sad task at this late hour—the Master set Himself to initiate these childish men into the spirit of a Kingdom not of this world. The Kings of the Gentiles have their own swaggering habits, and use fine names like Euergetes, benefactor : some of the kings of Egypt had chosen titles like that. But " the heavenly Court has its own etiquette," and the Kingdom of God is moved by another spirit and obeys other laws. This is its rule : " he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve . . . I am among you as the servant." Does this imply that the feet-washing recorded by St John has taken place, or was about to supply the Master's saying with a practical illustration ? It may be so, but the truth of the words applies to the Master's whole life and not merely to any one incident—He Who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

All the more because it stands out against a back-
ground of so much childishness and imperfection, Generous
Praise.
the saying of v. 28 is surely one of the most moving in the Gospels. " Ye are they which have continued " —the compound verb in its perfect tense gives a very strong meaning " who have continued steadfastly "—" with Me in My temptations." That last plural word arrests our attention. We speak of the temptation of our Lord, and think of the forty days

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 21-38. in the wilderness; but His temptations were not then ended—St Luke himself tells us that the Devil only departed from the Master “for a season.” Again and again His temptations rushed upon Him—the temptation to turn back, the temptation to take the easy way, the temptation to rule the world by compromising with it: soon in Gethsemane the last and mightiest assault would meet Him. But hardly less arresting is the Master’s loyal gratitude to these men whose comradeship had strengthened and helped Him: they knew something of their own frailty, and His generous recognition of their service must have made them blush. Who were they in their weakness thus to be allowed to strengthen the strong? Who were they in their unworthiness thus to be promised a throne and a crown? Perhaps it might be sufficient for such souls, and for us among them, to be allowed to win the Kingdom of their own souls, to be, as Dante has it—“crowned and mitred, sovereign o’er themselves.” The words of the Master’s promise seem to stretch beyond that, to far-opening realms of authority and influence. He will explain His own words in His own time. This is the Gospel version of the promise in Revelation: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne.”

Peter’s Peril. 3. *Simon Peter* is next in view—though not less clearly the Master’s tenderness for him, the Saviour’s intimate, personal love. At the opening of v. 31, the phrase, “And the Lord said,” is omitted by a number of the best MSS.: it may have been added

The Warnings of Love

by a scribe who thought the transition too abrupt. Luke xxii.

"Simon, Simon," one feels the emotion in the re- 21-38.

petition of the name, "Satan hath desired to have you"—this pronoun is in the plural: the reference is to the whole group; and the verb is a strong one, difficult to translate. "Desired to have" is rather weak; the R.V. margin gives "has obtained you by asking"; Dr Moffatt renders "has claimed the right to sift you all"; and Dr Glover, "has made a push to have you." Possibly the reference is to the opening chapters of the story of Job: the Satan, the accuser, is once more active, and, "not content with Judas," as Bengel remarks, claims the whole group as his prey. "But I"—here enters One mighty to save, stronger than the strong—"have prayed for thee"—the outstanding, impulsive disciple, so ready to give a lead for good or evil, "that thy faith may not utterly fail. And when thou hast turned again, strengthen thy brethren." It may be that this is a Hebraism turned into Greek: in that case, Dr Moffatt's rendering would give the shade of meaning, "You in turn must be a strength to your brothers." "And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death." Our hearts leap in sympathy with the throb in Peter's heart: love so tender and so personal would call forth the enthusiasm of hearts much less eager than Peter's. But it would have been better if Peter had vowed less proudly and had prayed more humbly. For the story of his fall is the best comment on his boasting.

4. There follows a somewhat obscure and difficult

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii.
21-38.
Changed
Times.

passage, which perhaps may best be summarised as a glimpse of the *changed conditions* waiting the disciples on the Master's departure. He reminded them of the instructions given to the Twelve (ix. 3) and to the Seventy (x. 4) and elicited their testimony that their pilgrimage of faith and obedience had led to no disaster. But now times were changing. He was going from them : troublous days were coming upon the land. The things written concerning Himself were pressing on to their fulfilment ; and those who had to live on through the troubled times to come would need purse and wallet and even sword. There has been much discussion over v. 38 and the two swords. When He said " Enough " did He mean that they were sufficiently armed for self-defence, or did He desire to dismiss the subject as one that might be left to their own common sense and need not trouble them now ? Various theories have been suggested, but perhaps the most absurd use to which the verse has been put is to buttress with it the double power of the Papacy. The last thing He could have meant was the propagation of the faith by the sword of any external compulsion : at the most, He hinted at the needful defence of life and loved ones in the midst of a rough and unsettled world.

The remarkable letter from John Bunyan's church to Sister Katherine Hustwhat, probably written by Bunyan himself, has already been quoted more than once in these pages. One of the most beautiful phrases in it alludes to v. 28 in this passage, " The poor and afflicted people God will save. To be distressed and tempted while here is a manifestation

The Warnings of Love

of our predestination to the ease and peace of another world. Predestinated to be conformable, or (as the old translations) predestinate that we should be like fashioned unto the shape of His Son, a great part of which lyeth in our being distressed, tempted, afflicted as He. And therefore it is, when He was departing hence to the Father, that He, as it were, *looked back as over His shoulder* to such, saying, You are they that have continued with Me in My temptations ; unto you I appoint a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." He is approaching His own agony, yet He looks back over His shoulder to warn His disciples. He is vanishing from the scene of His earthly ministry, yet He looks back over His shoulder to tell His friends that He will not forget their loyalty. After this, it is easy to believe that we have a great High Priest within the veil.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

Arthur Hugh Clough

LXXXVIII

GETHSEMANE

“ And He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the mount of Olives ; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me : nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly : and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye ? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”—LUKE xxii. 39-46.

Luke xxii. 39-46. No nobler porch to this Garden has ever been built than the opening verse of George Herbert's poem upon the Agony :

“ Philosophers have measur'd mountains,
Fathom'd the depths of seas, of states and kings ;
Walk'd with a staffe to heav'n, and tracèd fountains :
But there are two vast spacious things,
The which to measure it doth more behove :
Yet few there are that sound them : Sinne and Love.”

Deep
beyond
Sounding.

If we are going to read this great passage rightly, these are the things we must set ourselves to measure. The nilometer is a pillar with a scale upon it, revealing to the observer the rising of the river which means

Gethsemane

so much for the prosperity of Egypt: the melting Luke xxii. of snows on far-off mountains, the flowing of springs 39-46. and streams in the heart of Africa, the gathered force of a whole vast river-system is all brought to measurement there. When we go with our Lord to Gethsemane, we come to a point where the mightiest forces of the moral universe are measured and tested: here we see the full force of sin pressing on the heart of the Holiest: here we see the full force of loyalty and love pulsing through the soul of the world's Redeemer.

St Luke's account is more restrained than St Mark's vivid narrative. There is also the critical difficulty regarding vv. 43 and 44, that they are omitted by a number of important MSS. Dr Moffatt in his translation places them in a bracket: Westcott and Hort in double brackets, viewing them as no part of St Luke's Gospel in its original form, though an ingredient in the earliest Christian tradition. For our present purpose, we shall take the text as it stands and try to follow the story simply and with uttermost reverence. It is of little use to come to this garden if we do not come in adoration and in gratitude: here, if anywhere since the Burning Bush was kindled in the wilderness, the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

1. "He went as *He was wont*, to the Mount of Master and Disciples. Olives." A familiar track was openly taken: it was no longer needful to hide His plans from Judas. "And His disciples also followed Him"—it is on this solemn walk that Mark places the discussion of

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 39-46. the Master's warning and Peter's vows and promises. "And when He was at the place"—St Luke does not pause to give any geographical indication, such as the name of the place or that it was across the Kidron—"He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation." "My temptations," He had spoken of: those temptations of His were not yet ended: He was taking to His knees to conquer the fiercest and the last. These men were but recruits in the conflict, and He knew that they did not know how fierce their own battle might be when it came. He knew the battle better than they knew it themselves. "There is something in all our temptations more than was in the temptations of Christ," wrote John Owen. "There is something in ourselves to take part with every temptation; and there is enough in ourselves to tempt us, though nothing else should appear against us. With Christ it was not so. But this is so far from taking off His compassion towards us, that, on all accounts whatever, it doth increase it." That glance of compassion for His weak and stumbling disciples!—we cannot miss it as He goes forward to His own conflict.

The Master's Prayer. 2. "And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast"—nothing is said here about the three who were allowed to go forward with Him;—"and kneeled down"—standing was the usual posture for prayer, but in moments of intenser emotion a worshipper might kneel or fall on his face—"and prayed." If John Knox paused on his deathbed in the saying of the Lord's prayer, and asked, after "Our Father," "Who can repeat words so holy?"

Gethsemane

—we may ask who is fit to say the words of v. 42 Luke xxii. after the Master, or to enter into their unfathomable 39-46. meaning. The prayer we commonly call “the Lord’s Prayer” was the disciples’ prayer, appointed for them by their Master. This is the true “Lord’s prayer.” It unveils the very heart of Christ. It is a prayer of faith and love: “Father.” It is a prayer of natural human shrinking: “if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me.” The cup was a natural metaphor for a personal portion of joy or sorrow: had He not been singing with His disciples that Passover night Psalm cxvi., “I will take the cup of salvation”—yet into His own hands was now being put a cup of sorrow, black as hell and bitter as death. Yet it was a prayer of perfect submission and perfect obedience: “nevertheless not My will but Thine be done.” The victory remained with love; and victory still remains only with the prayer which is attuned to that note. A wise philosopher has said that there is nothing really good on earth except a good will. It is only in the will that moral quality inheres. The will is the essential man—the part of man which transcends mechanical law and becomes a creative cause. As we read these words, therefore, we watch the essential sacrifice of Christ. All that follows—the binding, the bearing of the Cross, the nails, the spear, the desolation—is involved in this. The new Isaac is bound upon the altar. Christ, in yielding His will, gives Himself. Gethsemane is a place to tarry long and prayerfully, if we also would die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

3. If indeed channels of communication were open

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii.
39-46.

The Angel
and the
Agony.

between the Master's soul and the heavenly places, it need not surprise us that in this moment of His uttermost, desperate need help reached Him from above. We are told, on the authority of one of the three who were with the Master, that there are certain things connected with "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" which "the angels desire to look into." Is there recorded in any celestial archive the message which that winged messenger brought home that strangest of all nights of history? And could any sinless spirit, even gazing close into the mystery of Christ's grief, understand it as we sinners can, because, though we look on from afar, we know it was for us? Yet even we cannot fathom the words that follow: "being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great clots of blood falling down to the ground." One hesitates to dogmatise even as to the words which deal with His physical condition: the narrative itself introduces an "as it were" which forbids over-much precision: there are said to have been historical cases in which the blood forced itself through the pores of the skin. But this word *agony* is still more unfathomable. We may draw faint parallels from the agonising of the athlete. We may speak and rightly of the agonies of heroes and martyrs,

"men who fall on death

Even as sobbing runners breast the rope."

But the instinct of the Christian Church has found here something beyond all parallel or measurement. Let it be dealt with by the pen of one of those who

Gethsemane

have dealt with it most reverently and tenderly.¹ Luke xxii.

“What is the bitterness within the cup that makes 39-46.

Him shudder and sweat blood-drops of agony? Not the fear of physical extinction (St Matt. x. 28), and not the wavering of faith in victory (St Matt. xxvi. 53, 64).

But dread of the death within the death. The black coil of human evil was closing round Him. . . .

His very obedience which brought Him to His unique intimacy with God was leading Him down into a place from which not merely the inward but also the outward fact of the presence of God was being withdrawn.” Yet Paul’s words are better than any others, though they are as unfathomable as the scene we are watching: “He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

4. “And when He rose up from prayer and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow”—St Luke in adding that last touch was perhaps more merciful to them than they would have been to themselves: “and said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray lest ye enter into temptation.” More than ever now, He knew the awfulness of the battle: how could they know it, who had slept in such an hour? “The measure of your success,” said Stuart the Fukien missionary to an audience of students shortly before his own martyrdom, “is the measure of your agony.” It is a hard lesson for frail flesh to learn. But it is an endless and most needful challenge to the soul, alike in the life of prayer and in the life of service. If disciples

Through
Agony to
Victory.

¹ J. A. Robertson, *The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus*, p. 282.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. can fall asleep even in Gethsemane, there is no spot
39-46. upon the earth where we may not be in peril of the Enchanted Ground.

As we stand within sight and hearing of things such as these, we remember that there are three significant gardens in the age-long drama of Redemption. One is the Garden of Innocence, where the serpent enters, where the forbidden fruit is eaten, where man makes himself an exile. Another is the Garden of the Agony, where the Holy and Incarnate Love yields Himself for our deliverance, and we, self-exiled sinners, gaze from afar off, wondering, scarcely understanding, yet expectant and adoring. And the last is the Garden of the final Triumph: dark Gethsemane is but a step on the way to it: "to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

"When shall we wake, and waking, find us there?"

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

My soul . . . found another will had taken the place of her own—a will all divine, which yet was her own and so natural that she found herself infinitely more free in this will than she had been in her own.

Madame Guyon.

LXXXIX

THE POWER OF DARKNESS AND THE POWER OF GOD

“ And while He yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss ? When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword ? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his ear, and healed him. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to Him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves ? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me : but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest’s house. . . . And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee ? And many other things blasphemously spake they against Him. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led Him into their council, saying, Art Thou the Christ ? tell us. And He said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe : And if I also ask you, ye will not answer Me, nor let Me go. Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art Thou then the Son of God ? And He said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness ? for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth.”—LUKE xxii. 47-54a, 63-71.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 47-54a,
63-71.
Darkness
and God.

RESERVING for separate treatment the verses which tell of Peter's fall, let us treat as one section the rest of the material from v. 47 to the end of the chapter. The verses give us the first stages of our Lord's captivity and trial, and a thread of interpretation may be found in the two phrases which speak of "the power of darkness" (v. 53) and of "the power of God" (v. 69). It is true that the Greek word is different in the two cases: in the first case it is "authority," and in the second it is the word from which our word "dynamic" comes. Yet the essential ideas resemble each other so much that the English cadence does not mislead us: indeed, Dr Moffatt renders the first phrase "the dark Power has its way." And we shall get the most of what is here if we can realise how that night our Lord felt the powers of darkness moving to their opportunity—how also He was able to look beyond and above them to the ultimate triumph of the power of God.

The Dark
Power at
Work.

1. "This is your hour," He said to His captors, "and the power of darkness." There are times when men and things seem to be in the grip of powers greater than themselves, when liberty of initiative seems taken away from us and we can only yield ourselves to destiny. The night in which our Lord was betrayed was one of those times. He felt principalities and powers in conflict round Him. "The power of darkness"—in that moment He felt it closing upon His soul, like night upon a wayfarer, like an army upon a besieged stronghold—though even then He did not doubt God's ultimate victory.

The Power of Darkness

How deep the darkness was we see if we follow Luke xxii. the story from phrase to phrase. "While He yet ^{47-54a,} spake, behold, a multitude, and the man called ^{63-71.} Judas"—there seems a touch of scorn in the phrase, as if the evangelist were holding even the name of Judas at a little distance—"one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him," evidently the concerted signal. "But Jesus said unto him, Judas, is it with a kiss"—this comes first for emphasis—the sign and symbol of friendship!—"is it with a kiss that thou betrayest the Son of Man?" The dark power is working: could there be a darker fate for the Son of Man than this, to be betrayed by a disciple whom He had called and trusted? Could there be a darker deed than this—to turn the sacrament of friendship into the signal for enmity? Could there be a darker soul than this—so near to Christ as to have the access of that kiss, and yet so remote from Christ as to turn that access into eternal shame?

"Judas, dost thou betray Me with a kiss?
Canst thou find hell about My lips, and miss
Of life just at the gates of life and bliss?"

So asks George Herbert. But it is to this that the powers of darkness bring men—to find hell even at the gates of heaven.

The powers of darkness were at work that night, not only making souls untrue but leading even true men into grave mistake. "When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?"—here

The Disciple
wounds, the
Master heals

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. perhaps being the first opportunity to use the swords
47-54a, they had brought. "And one of them"—apparently
63-71. not waiting for the Master's reply—"smote the
servant of the High Priest, and cut off his ear." We
could almost have guessed that this impulsive act
came from the impulsive heart of Simon Peter : the
three Synoptics do not reveal this : it is the Fourth
Gospel which gives it away, possibly because, by the
time that Gospel was written, no danger for Peter
lay in the revealing of the secret. But if the act was
like Peter, the deed that followed was no less like
his Lord. "Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus
far." The phrase is obscure : Dr Plummer remarks
that this is an evidence for its genuineness : had any
one been inventing the story, something clearer
would have been inserted. Christ might have been
speaking to His enemies : "let Me alone till I have
healed the man." Or He might have been addressing
His own disciples, bidding their well-meant inter-
ference cease. But if there is ambiguity about the
phrase, there was no ambiguity about the deed :
"He touched his ear and healed him," the last of
the merciful works of the Lord of Mercy, character-
istically wrought upon an enemy.

The powers of darkness left nothing undone that
would add to the darkness of that dark night : the
Saviour was not only betrayed by a disciple, and
badly served by the blundering of another, but He
had ranged against Him the religious leaders of His
own people, men in whom He should have found His
chief allies for the cause of love and for the Kingdom
of Heaven. There they were in the torchlight before

The Power of Darkness

Him—"chief priests and elders," as well as the **Luke xxii.** military element in the "captains of the temple" **47-54a,** who had come to help in carrying out the arrest. **63-71.** And Jesus said to them, "As against a thief are ye come out"—this is the emphasis of the Greek phrase—"with swords and staves?" They had had their chance many a time in broad daylight; He had not hidden Himself. "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me": they preferred this quiet spot with the friendly multitude far away. "This is your hour and the power of darkness"—the night that enfolded the world not so black as the evil hearts of men.

2. Passing from v. 54 to v. 63 we find ourselves in the early morning in the High Priest's house. Apparently the informal trials before Annas and Caiaphas, which St Luke does not record, are now over; but a legal sitting of the Sanhedrin could not be held before daybreak, and for a few tortured hours our Lord was left at the mercy of the rougher element among His captors. The cruelty of the human heart is amazing when once it is awakened: sometimes the very helplessness or gentleness of its victim seems to be its supreme provocation, and now the Lamb of God was at the mercy of the wolves. One can scarcely read the details—the mocking, the smiting, the blindfolding, that He might play the prophet for their amusement, and the nameless mockeries which this evangelist sums up in one general phrase—without blushing for the human nature which could bring itself to such deeds and speak such words. Yet the fierceness of soldiers and

The Vision of
God's Power.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. servants was scarcely more terrible than the cold
47-54a, cruelty of their superiors. By v. 66, it is daylight :
63-71. a formal meeting of the Sanhedrin can be held :
probably its constituent elements are described in
the phrases, "the elders of the people and the chief
priests and the scribes." What hubbub of discussion
there may have been is scarcely reflected here. All
that is recorded is a few short sharp questions and
answers. "Art Thou the Christ? Tell us." And
He said unto them, "If I tell you, ye will not believe ;
and if I put a question to you, ye will not answer."
The phrase "nor let Me go" is omitted in some
important manuscripts. Then came the great de-
claration, soaring triumphantly above all this chaos,
cruelty, and terror : "henceforth shall the Son of
Man sit at the right hand of the power of God."
Then said they all, as if forced from them in a
simultaneous and sudden surprise, "Art Thou the
Son of God?" And He said unto them, "Ye say
it. I am." At that point His doom was sealed in
fact before the Jewish court, as it had already been
sealed in intention : "they said, what need we any
further witness? for we ourselves have heard of His
own mouth."

A Lesson in
Faith.

It is the best lesson to take from this scene of
triumphant evil that the Master Himself was able to
set against the obvious fact of the power of darkness
the believing certainty of the power of God. *The
power of darkness!*—if any one doubts it, if any one
does not dread it, let him tell over, like beads of
remembrance, those things we have seen—that
traitorous disciple, that kiss of falsehood, those

The Power of Darkness

ranged hostilities, those deeds of shame unspeakable. Luke xxii. But the memory of these things must not hide what 47-54a, the Master reveals—the *right hand of the power of* 63-71. *God*. Amazing light in the midst of so profound a gloom, a gleam of blue sky seen from the depths of the abyss! He knew that, weak and helpless though He now seemed, it should soon be apparent that all the might of the heavens was behind Him. He believed that darkness was never God's last word, and that a universe God had made could never permanently be ruled by evil. It was not the last time that powers of darkness were to sweep across the world: they may yet again have their day and their hour. But believing folk will never suffer to close that glimpse of heaven which their Master opened: they will believe in the right hand of God's power and in the Christ who is seated there; and till the day breaks they will be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

FOR MEDITATION AND THANKSGIVING

Post hiemem sequitur aestas.

Thomas à Kempis

After midnight cometh noon,
After January June,
After storm and tempest calm,
After martyrdom the palm,
After battle lull of strife,
After death eternal life.

James Williams

XC

PETER'S FALL

"And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him : for he is a Galilæan. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."—LUKE xxii. 54b-62.

Luke xxii.
54b-62.
A Vivid
Portrait.

THE dark power that was abroad that night seemed to turn itself in every conceivable direction, and it found a ready victim in Simon Peter. There is an impression of historical reality, more than ordinarily vivid, about verses such as these. It has previously been remarked that if we had to defend the substantial historical trustworthiness of the Gospels, the allusions to Simon Peter might be no bad point at which to begin : he is unmistakably a real character, and the same character in all the four Gospels. Never is he more himself than in this incident : the fire lit in the courtyard shines with so real a glow

Peter's Fall

upon hands and faces round it that it becomes one **Luke xxii.** of the best attested facts of ancient history. And **54b-62.** if that is true how much else is true as well! It is very remarkable how much testimony converges on this portion of the story. All the four Gospels tell us that three denials were foretold; and all four record that three denials took place. There are considerable differences in detail, but these differences, which are natural to the reporting of any event by a group of observers, only emphasise their unanimity on the main happenings. The story is very frank. That frankness is part of the wisdom and love of God, for the story is told for our sakes. As Newman sings,

“Not in their brightness, but their earthly stains
Are the true Seed revealed to earthly eyes . . .
And saints are lowered that the world may rise.”

1. Every man is a mixture, but Simon Peter was **Rock and Sand.** a strange mixture of a man—boastfulness and timidity, rock and sand, strength and weakness. Even had we not known the story of his fall, and were coming upon it now for the first time, it would scarcely surprise us: the boastfulness of his professions and avowals would almost have prepared us along psychological lines for a supreme reaction. We may see the mixture here in one little phrase: “Peter followed afar off.” Dr Plummer quotes the words of a Latin commentator: *quod sequitur, amoris est, quod e longo, timoris*—his following comes from his love, but his following afar off from his fear. Was the chill of the night beginning to creep

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 54b-62. into his soul as he cautiously followed the procession with its Prisoner? His vows and promises were receding into the background. The little band of comrades was scattered. The Master's eye was off him. O Peter, the dark power is out to-night: watch and pray!

By the Fire. 2. On the high levels where Jerusalem lay, a spring night could be very cold. So "they kindled a fire in the courtyard and sat down together"; and Peter, who, as we learn from the Fourth Gospel, had been smuggled in by a friend, "sat down among them." Was this the ingenuity of love, desiring to be as near as possible to the Master? or was it mere heedlessness? or was it a kind of bravado, thrusting his head into the lion's mouth? Even in that huddled group, O Peter, watch and pray!—the dark power is working to-night, and may be on thee in a moment! Perhaps, having gone so far and having achieved a successful entry, he deemed himself safe. But, as some one remarks, it is a favourite stratagem of our temptations to sham a retreat, and then turn round upon us when we feel ourselves most secure. And once and again that night that stratagem was tried upon Peter's soul. The first assault was in the remark of a maid servant. It is vividly told. "A certain maid"—St. John says she was the door-keeper—"beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him," one can see the knitted brows, the gleaming, perhaps impudent and malicious eyes—"and said, this man also"—does the *also* refer to the other disciple of St John xviii. 15, who gained access for Peter, and who seems to have been

Peter's Fall

in no immediate peril himself even though he was **Luke xxii.** one of Christ's followers?—"this man also was with **54b-62.** Him." "And he denied Him"—the man who was ready to go to prison and to death "denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not." There is nothing calling for special observation here as regards the second accusation and the second denial. But St Luke tells that the third followed "at the distance of one hour"—Oh, these temptations of ours that sham a retreat and then come galloping back with all their horses and chariots!—and he bears out the other records in affirming a curious positiveness in the third accusation. The emphasis is well brought out in Dr Moffatt's translation, "Another man insisted, That fellow really was with Him. Why, he is a Galilean." Again the variations in detail go with the agreement in substance to give the perspective of solid reality. St Luke, as if he had by this time so much sin and shame to record that he could write no more, omits the cursing and the swearing which Mark—the evangelist who had Peter behind him—so frankly records. "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest."

3. Two things brought Peter back to himself after this strange frenzy of fear and falsehood. One was the external sign, which seems to have impressed itself not only on Simon Peter's conscience, but on the memory of all who preserved any recollections of the scene: "immediately while he yet spake, the cock crew." Here was the mental signal which brought Peter back to his own vows and promises, and to the Master's warnings of love. But St Luke

The Sign and
the Look.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 54b-62. preserves a second detail which the gratitude of the Church has enshrined in her memory with special tenderness—that “the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.” Was the Master being led through the outer court at this time, or had Peter pressed nearer than the group and the fire? We cannot adjust the details, but that look has a value independent of time and place. It searched Peter at the moment: it has searched many another coward and sinner since then. The psychologists have seized upon it. “In the later stage of temptation the only possible hope of escape from actual sinning must come to us from without—a sudden movement that calls off the attention or something that startles us in the very approach to the act. The modern classic illustration of this is in Browning’s *Pippa Passes*; the scriptural, in the silent look of Jesus on faithless Peter.”¹ The poets have found in the look untold and unimaginable significance: Mrs Browning sets the comfort of it beside the comfort of that other phrase, “Jesus wept.”

“Oh, to render plain
By help of having loved a little and mourned,
That look of sovran love and sovran pain
Which He, Who could not sin but suffered, turned
On him who could reject but not sustain.”

Yet not the psychologists as such, nor the poets as such, but sinful men aspiring to be disciples—they can best interpret that look as, with Peter, they take it to themselves. He and they together can see pain added to pain in the eyes of the Redeemer—the pain

¹ George Steven, *The Psychology of the Christian Soul*, p. 121.

Peter's Fall

of a friend's failure added to the pain of the world's **Luke xxii.** hate. But they can also see in those eyes love soften- **54b-62.** ing judgment, and mercy which even in the abyss holds out hope. Once more Mrs Browning reads rightly the meaning of the look :

“The cock crows coldly—Go, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
For when thy final need is dreariest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here;
My voice to God and angels shall attest,
Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear.”

“And Peter remembered . . . and went out and wept bitterly.”

It is difficult to believe that Simon Peter's memory **A Mark** and character could ever lose the mark made by **Indelible.** such an experience. One examines his writing to search for traces of it: if they can be clearly identified, they will be a better commentary than any that other pen could produce. It is dangerous to let fancy run loose in forging links of connection. But Peter was near enough to Christ on that betrayal night to know that “when He was reviled, He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not.” In those same tragic hours he wandered far enough away from his Master to know experimentally about “sheep going astray,” who have to return to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. Once ashamed of the very fellowship of the Master, he could say out of a new vision and a new strength, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.” And it may not be fanciful to find in the threefold emphasis of “the God of all grace . . . will repair

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxii. 54b-62. and recruit and strengthen you " a contrast with the emphasis of that early threefold denial. The dark power may do its worst ; but for the heart which, in spite of its failures, is essentially loyal and willing, the dark power is ultimately the defeated power ; and Grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

As I, like Peter, vows have made,
Yet acted Peter's part,
So conscience, like the cock, upbraids
My base, ungrateful heart.
Lord Jesus, hear a sinner's cry,
My broken peace renew ;
And grant one pitying look, that I
May weep with Peter too.

The Olney Hymns

XCI

PILATE AND HEROD

“And the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked Him, saying, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answered him and said, Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this Man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilæan. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.”—LUKE xxiii. 1-12.

THE scene changes suddenly from the ecclesiastical Luke xxiii. to the civil tribunal. As regards the former, there is 1-12. no phrase in the end of chapter xxii. corresponding to that in St Mark, “they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.” But the tone of St Luke’s Plotting for His Death.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. narrative implies it, and it is understood in the sudden reference of the case to Pilate. This was probably one of the periods during which the right of capital punishment was withdrawn from the Jews, and it was necessary to get the death sentence confirmed by the Roman power. So "the whole multitude of them arose and led Him unto Pilate." The "multitude" of v. 1 is the Sanhedrin, not the mob; the mob appears in v. 4, having probably been attracted by this imposing procession of ecclesiastics through the streets.

The enemies of Christ showed great skill in turning into a political form an accusation which so far had been theological. There were three points in the indictment. (a) "We found this fellow perverting the nation"; some colourable evidence could no doubt be adduced for this in the excitement which surrounded Christ's movements, as on the recent triumphal entry. (b) "And forbidding to give tribute to Caesar": as it happened, only a few days before (see xx. 25) He had done the very opposite, bidding men "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." (c) "And saying that He Himself is Christ a King": this was a statement at once true and untrue, its weight depending on the meaning which they hoped Pilate would read into it. From their standpoint it was an admirable case, impressive in its orderliness, resistless in its logic. Never dreaming that there could be any obstacle to their hearts' desire, "they began" to accuse Christ, until Pilate interrupted them by an attempt to take the case more or less into his own hands.

Pilate and Herod

All the four evangelists record Pilate's question, **Luke xxiii. 1-12.** "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" And in all four the "Thou" is placed first for emphasis. It is as if all the ages to come were to be allowed to overhear Pilate's tone of pity or of scorn. "And He answered him, and said, Yes." It was a simple and straightforward answer, but it is difficult to understand how, if this had been all that passed, Pilate could have gone on immediately to say to the chief priests and the people, "I find no fault in this man." Probably those are right who think that here we have one of the undesigned and partially concealed correspondences between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel. The transition here from v. 3 to v. 4 is made easy and natural if between the two there was an interview between Pilate and his Prisoner, in which the Procurator learned something of the manner of this Kingship and discovered that from One Who only claimed a Kingdom of the truth the Imperial Throne had nothing to fear. But "they insisted, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place," words which may veil another correspondence with the Fourth Gospel, because they imply a ministry in Southern Palestine more extensive than any which the Synoptics record.

Pilate leapt at the word *Galilee*. Herod was in Jerusalem for the feast and who knows what muddle of motives was in the Procurator's brain as he suddenly resolved to send his Prisoner to that other tribunal? He may have wished merely to evade a difficult duty: he may have desired to make friends

Links with
the Fourth
Gospel.

Judicial
Silence.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. after their quarrel: his object may have been to elicit any Galilean evidence on the subject of Christ's doings. "And when Herod saw Jesus, he was very pleased": as Dr Bruce remarks, "exceeding glad" is rather a dignified phrase by which to express Herod's sinister and malicious delight: "for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him, and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him." Perhaps there is nothing morally more instructive in the Gospel story than that strange and unwonted silence of the Master recorded in v. 9—Herod plying his many questions, Christ answering him nothing. The silence was more of a rebuke than any words could have been, and came perhaps as near contempt as Christ in His grace ever allowed Himself to come. How eager Christ was to answer the questions of true inquirers, and how wisely and patiently He had dealt in the Temple courts these last days even with difficult and malicious objectors! But facing a man like this, Christ was only silent: and in that awful judicial silence Herod and the Prisoner changed places: Herod was judged and sentenced, and all the ages have not availed to reverse the verdict. This scene before Herod is St Luke's special contribution to the story of the trial. Some have guessed that Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward (see viii. 3) may have been the evangelist's informant. If it were so, one wishes she had recorded some of the questions Herod put: but they are left to our imagination, as are the king's astonishment and anger at a Prisoner Who did not cower nor cringe before him, and Whose

Pilate and Herod

strange unaccustomed silence must have made con- Luke xxiii.
science speak, as one sometimes hears one's heart 1-12.
beat in the silent night.

If Christ was silent, His enemies were not. "Meanwhile the high priests and scribes stood and accused Him with might and main" (v. 10, Moffatt). They would let no chance slip, and like a pack of ill-conditioned curs they must have rushed round at the Prisoner's heels from the one court to the other, hideously eager that no judge for any reason should show sign of leniency. Herod preferred not to take the final responsibility, and "sent Him again to Pilate," but first—was it in revenge for the scorn of Christ's silence? — "set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe" —probably some cast-off purple of royalty. "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together, for before they were at enmity between themselves." Perhaps the dispute had been about jurisdiction, and the polite acknowledgment by each of the jurisdiction of the other had healed the breach. Compared with the reconciliation of two such great and powerful men, the fate of a Galilean prophet seemed to matter but little; and yet the world remembers either of them merely because that gentle Prisoner was that morning bandied about between them.

In the next section we shall have a completer opportunity of studying Pontius Pilate. It may be wise now to take a second look at Herod. "He had heard many things of Christ and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him." Herod belonged

The Lure of
a false
Wonder.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 1-12. to a recognisable and fairly permanent type of character—the type which the word *sensationalist* perhaps best describes. He wanted a new sensation for himself and his jaded court. He had heard stories of this Worker of wonders, and he wanted to see Him—much as he would have wanted to see the last new magician from the East, much as he would have wanted to see Dr Faustus, had Dr Faustus passed that way. That was a demand which Christ refused to honour: He had come into the world for another and a deeper purpose than this. But the appetite which Herod showed so frankly does not become extinct as the ages pass: men are still looking for something to amuse them, to excite them, to take them out of themselves. The danger is that, in the quest for life's sensations, they may miss its real wonders as tragically and as completely as Herod missed the real wonder of that fateful morning. They may be so entranced by fireworks at the Crystal Palace that they may miss the quieter splendours of the Milky Way. They may be so attracted by the strident voices of an advertising world that they forget Him Whose name is Wonderful, because He comes quietly and in lowly guise. "From all blindness of heart . . . and from all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil, good Lord, deliver us."

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

The attitude of our day is not that of an utter rejection of Christianity. Like Herod we

Pilate and Herod

examine into it, questioning it in many words Luke xxiii.
as to what it can do for the world, just as we I-12.
put the same question to the scheme of science
and philosophy. But to an age which, like
Herod, is deficient in real faith in its Author,
Christianity often answers—nothing.

The Patience of Hope

XCII

PILATE AND CHRIST

“And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, Said unto them, Ye have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people : and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him : No, nor yet Herod : for I sent you to him ; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas : (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder was cast into prison.) Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath He done ? I have found no cause of death in Him : I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired ; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”—LUKE xxiii. 13-25.

Luke xxiii. WE watch through this paragraph the struggle of a
13-25. man with a mob. It is a fascinating thing to watch ;
Mob Law. but as he quickly reveals himself to be a weak man, and as the mob is strong in passion and in prejudice, we are not long in doubt as to the issue. Measured by official position, measured by the powers at his disposal, Pilate bestrode that narrow world like a

Pilate and Christ

Colossus; yet his iron dominion had feet of clay, **Luke xxiii.** and a determined crowd could twist him to their ^{13-25.} will. Through the dramatic scene, Pilate yields inch by inch, but he yields. The stages of concession are very clearly marked in St Luke's narrative; and the inevitable law of that awful day found in Pilate its supreme illustration—that those who seemed to be judging Christ were really judged by Him: He passes to His Cross as to a throne: in the light of the ages, they who have sentenced Him are self-sentenced, self-condemned.

1. Pilate soon had his unwelcome Prisoner back upon his hands, and speedily took his first stand in his struggle with the multitude. Weak though he was, he was at least well-meaning. He “called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people”—did he hope to find the people a trifle less implacable, a trifle more human than their rulers? —“and said to them, Ye have brought this Man unto me as one that perverteth the people”—a convenient summary of the threefold charge already given in v. 2; “and, behold, I, having examined Him before you”—no secrecy, no double-dealing, no “backstairs influence”—“have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod”: this sounds as if Herod, in spite of his savage and cumbrous mockeries had sent back a recommendation to mercy. The next clause in most of the best MSS. runs not—“I sent you to him,” but “He sent Him back to us.” In that case possibly the latter part of v. 15 may summarise Herod's judgment and report: “nothing worthy of

Pilate's First Stand.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 13-25. death has been done by (not unto) Him." It all sounds as if Pilate, supported by Herod, had found firm ground from which to resist any mob. But at that point concession begins. "I will therefore chastise Him"—why, if He be innocent? Perhaps to appease Christ's enemies by inflicting some sort of punishment upon Him Whom they hated: perhaps to subdue this strange, disturbing Teacher into silence and make Him aware of the dangers of a demagogue's part. The Greek word used for scourging is, as Dr Plummer points out, a curiously light word for a terrible experience: it is the word that might be used of chastising a child: Dr Moffatt renders the clause "I shall release Him with a whipping." Was the Governor in this grim moment attempting to be playful? Verse 17 is now generally regarded as a late explanatory gloss upon the passage, and is omitted by Westcott and Hort and other modern editors owing to its absence from the best MSS. The very suggestion of release stirred priests and people to fury. The cry arose, full-throated, unanimous, "Away with this man and release unto us Barabbas." And the evangelist adds his biographical note—"A man who for a certain sedition made into the city, and for murder, was cast into prison." The biographical note is also a moral judgment: thus low had fallen the people of God, the priests of the Most High.

Nothing is known, except from the Gospels, of this custom of releasing a prisoner at the feast: perhaps it was a custom of short duration. Why Barabbas should have been selected we do not know: had his

Pilate and Christ

sedition leadership made him a popular hero? or Luke xxiii. did they merely make a wild plunge for the worst 13-25. person they could think of, as preferable to the Jesus Whom they hated? Be that as it may, this choice between Christ and Barabbas is the symbolic choice of the ages. It exhibits the pendulum of the human will in its clearest and most startling sweep. It is the moral alternative stripped of all disguises all subtleties, all complications. And in its essence that choice is made again whenever men follow passion rather than duty, enthrone brute force above reason and right, or give the rein to their lower selves at the cost of crucifying their higher nature. It is a mysterious world in which men are allowed such powers of choice. The mystery deepens when men, with such powers of choice at their disposal, use them to gratify a moment's impulse, though the consequences shape destiny for themselves and their children's children.

2. Pilate made his second stand. "Pilate, willing to release Jesus"—one seems to see the Procurator's weak but well-meaning will beating vainly against the passions of the mob like a tired bird against a furious storm—"spake again to them." Was it the warning of Pilate's wife, of which St Matthew tells us, that stiffened his resolve to make this temporary resistance? Human motives are always mixed: who knows what mixture of good nature, of pity for an obviously harmless Prisoner, of superstitious fear, of official dignity and the stubbornness appropriate thereto, may have been struggling in Pilate's heart? Let it be set down to his credit that, though it were

Pilate's
Second
Stand.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 13-25. only for a moment, he at least took a stand and made a struggle to save Christ from the fury of the Jews. But it was fury that would not be sated, and the renewed suggestion of release produced but the hellish outcry of "Crucify, crucify."

Pilate Yields. 3. Then Pilate made his third and last stand. He tried reason: "Why, what evil hath He done?" He tried an official declaration of innocence: "I have found no cause of death in Him." He tried concession, reverting to his own previous proposal: "I will chastise Him and let Him go." Indeed, if we go by St John's order of events (xix. 1) the terrible scourging took place before Pilate had finished his wrestle with the mob or given in to their ultimate demand: it took place as an experiment to see if it would not satisfy the enemies of Jesus. But it was all in vain: "they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and the chief priests prevailed." We should read slowly, thoughtfully, with a sense of amazement upon our spirits; sin and love are still trying their strength: though the shrieking multitude and the wavering Procurator did not know it, we are at the turning point in the history of a world. "And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." Strangely impressive is the wording of v. 25. It is not merely "he released unto them Barabbas." The previous description of the man is substantially and deliberately repeated that nothing of its moral significance may be lost. "He released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired: but he

Pilate and Christ

delivered Jesus to their will." Pilate was "willing," Luke xxiii. but his will was weak ; and the will of the cruel had ¹³⁻²⁵ its victory.

If Herod is a type of vulgar sensationalism, Pilate is a representative of the weakness which is sometimes disguised as power. He had glimpses of better things, but no power to force his way in the teeth of the tempest. He was a King Canute who not only could not compel the waves to retreat but himself retreated before their advance. And so Christ's judge was judged. If the only really good thing in the world is a good will, the only really bad thing in the world is a bad will. It was to that bad thing, that hateful, cruel tyranny, that Pilate in his weakness handed over Christ in His gentleness. Yet though the will of men had its hour, God's will, unseen but mighty, was after all ruling and over-ruling. Neither Judas nor Herod nor Pilate, nor any one else who played an evil part in an evil day, was altogether outside this ultimate control. So the Apostles felt as in the after light of the Resurrection they looked back on all that had happened. "The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus ; Whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just ; and desired a murderer to be granted unto you ; and killed the Prince of Life, Whom God hath raised from the dead."¹ "Ye delivered Him up ; ye denied Him ; ye desired a murderer." Could there be a blacker

The Will
Unseen.

¹ Acts iii. 13 f.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. record ? But *God* hath raised Him ! If He wrought
13-25. even the deed of those passionate and evil wills into
His purpose, is there any darkness which He cannot
turn into day ?

FOR MEDITATION AND THANKSGIVING

Was ever battle won like this—
Where He that lost was gaining ;
And He that fell was triumphing,
And He that died was reigning :
And He that held the reed of scorn
A sceptre was obtaining ?

John Mason Neale

"Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Disgrace, or blame, nothing but well and fair.
And what may quiet us in a death so noble."

XCH

VIA DOLOROSA

"And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon,
a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid
the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed
Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed
and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters
* of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for
your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which
they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never
bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin
to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.
For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in
the dry? And there were also two other, malefactors, led with
Him to be put to death."—LUKE xxiii. 26-32.

"THEY led Him away"—not the mob now, but the Luke xxiii.
soldiers, who for the moment were the grim instru- 26-32.
ment, by Pilate's decision, alike of ecclesiastical
relentlessness and of popular fury. We pause at the
outset of this strange progress—the most arresting,
most unforgettable procession that ever moved
through an earthly city—we pause to worship and
adore this completeness of submission, this willing
will-lessness. "They led Him away": the Helper
is helpless by His own consent: the Liberator is
bound: the King is in the guise of a criminal and a
slave. It is a great mystery. If it be not a mystery
of love, it is insoluble: it is enough to darken all

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 26-32. history with its shadow and leave no daybreak anywhere.

Simon the Crossbearer.

1. As they led Him away, He must have begun the dreadful march to Calvary Himself carrying His cross. Indeed, St John expressly (xix. 17) tells us so. But by this time physical exhaustion must have been extreme. We cannot forget the agony in the Garden. We recall the daily preaching and the nightly praying of the previous week. Last had come the cruel flagellation, itself often fatal to its victims. And evidently our Lord sank under the weight of His burden. The phrase "coming out of the country" suggests a spot near or just outside of the city gate. The soldiers, perhaps in a mood of rough helpfulness towards their prisoner, and in a mood of rough carelessness towards the rights and liberties of anybody else, seized upon a man coming to meet the procession and impressed him into the task of carrying the cross. This was Simon of Cyrene in North Africa: there was a synagogue of the Cyrenians¹ in Jerusalem which suggests that people from that region were not scarce in the Jewish capital. On him, then, "they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus." Simon may have found this an embarrassing predicament, an awkward interruption, but his feelings were not consulted. Could any incident illustrate more clearly the strange mingling of chance and fate which is so often recognisable in the events that shape our lives? If Simon had been a few minutes earlier or later, another might have been pressed into that service:

¹ See Acts vi. 9.

Via Dolorosa

as it was, his name goes sounding along with the Luke **xxiii.** name of the Crucified to the end of time. If we may **26-32.** judge from the descriptive phrase in St Mark, "the father of Alexander and Rufus," it looks as though Simon were the father of two well-known Christians : could these be the Alexander of Acts xix. 33 and the Rufus of Rom. xvi. 13 ? But apart from precise identifications, it looks as though that strange encounter had left a blessing upon the rough shoulders that bore the load for Christ.

2. What follows is peculiar to St Luke. "There **Daughters of** followed Him a great company of people." Did this **Jerusalem.** mean that some of those who had hailed the triumphal entry and had been strangely invisible in these last hours of hatred grown furious, had once more rallied to the attraction of Jesus ? Among them it is not surprising that Luke picks out the women for special mention. It is his Gospel that gives us with such fullness of detail Mary, and Anna, and the sisters of Bethany : the widow of Nain, the woman that was a sinner, the women who ministered to Christ, the woman that cried after Him "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee," the woman with the spirit of infirmity. It is he who now lets us see these tearful faces and hear those wailing voices, "women which bewailed and lamented Him." It was said to be against the law to lament publicly a prisoner on his way to die, but love and gratitude cannot always be held in by regulation. And among the honourable women of this Gospel these are not least in honour who were as near to Christ as they could get, and not ashamed to show their pity, when some of His

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 26-32. strong disciples were far away. The day of the cross was again a day of judgment, and some that had been first were last and the last first.

He turned to them. It is instructive to notice what our Lord does with this tribute of sorrow. He turned to them, a movement which would have been impossible if He had been still bearing the burden of His cross, and a movement most characteristic of Him, or at any rate most characteristic of this evangelist's descriptions of Him. When He heard the centurion's testimony, "He turned Him about and said unto the people, I have not found so great faith" (vii. 9). At the feast in Simon's house "He turned to the woman" (vii. 44). When the sons of thunder wanted to call down fire from heaven, "He turned and rebuked them" (ix. 55). After His thanksgiving to the Lord of Heaven and earth, "He turned Him unto His disciples" to say certain things privately (x. 23). One fancies that this may have been a sign of the eagerness that was in Him, His desire to put Himself at the disposal of human souls, and to make them feel that He and they were face to face and heart to heart. If that be so, it is indeed very moving to see Him on this last journey doing the same, as if to assure the daughters of Jerusalem that He heard them, that He was not unconscious of their presence, and not ungrateful for their sympathy. But He does two things with their tribute of sorrow.

Weep not
for me.

(a) *He declines their pity.* He does not despise it. He does not resent it; but He does not need it. He is no waif broken upon the wheel of fortune: even now He is the servant of an unfaltering Purpose.

Via Dolorosa

He does not need pity and He does not ask for it : Luke **xxiii.**
“weep not for Me” : it may be that here is an ^{26-32.}
example for all time and a lesson to all who fall into
the habit of moaning over their own small sacrifices
and sorrows : the heroic temper was Christ’s temper,
and it ought to be ours also. But even more clearly
there is here a side light upon the Master’s own
sacrifice. It is possible to state the idea of the
Atonement in such a crude way as to make it appear
as if God had laid on His Son a burden which the
Son would not have taken upon Himself, as if God
had been unfair to Christ in devising a scheme of
mercy for men. But what if Christ Himself does not
ask our pity ? What if self-sacrifice be the deepest
joy of His heart as it is of God’s ? Browning’s cry
to Hercules,

“Gladness be with thee, helper of our world !
I think this is the authentic sign and seal
Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad,
And more glad, until gladness blossoms, bursts
Into a rage to suffer for mankind
And re-commence at sorrow”—

might be our greeting to the world’s Redeemer.
This *Via Dolorosa*, sad and pain-darkened though it
be, is not the place for pity : it is rather the place
for adoration and for praise.

There are certain forms even of worship and
devotion which are apt to err on the sentimental
side : they drain the emotions without quickening
the conscience. Stopford Brooke wrote in his journal
on a certain Good Friday : “I ought to have gone
to church, but I did not. I can’t stand the elaborate

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 26-32. mourning which is practised now in all the churches for the most triumphal act of pure love which ever was done in all the history of the world." This riot of feeling is congenial to some natures, but any artificial stimulating of it, any tendency to think it an end in itself, is checked by this firm word from the sorrowful way, "Weep not for Me."

Weep for yourselves. (b) He turns their grief into *another channel*. "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." This is of one piece with His own feeling when He beheld the city and wept over it; the city and its people needed pity far more than He. Terrible as was His case, He was in the will of God and asked no pity for Himself even at the darkest turning of that thorny road: but Jerusalem had missed her true peace and was moving to meet her doom. His thoughts move on once more to the days of judgment that are coming, the hard case (v. 29) of mothers and children in the approaching crash of a civilisation, the case of those (v. 30) who will prefer death rather than life, extinction rather than continued misery in the terrible days that are to be.¹ The proverbial phrase in v. 31, "If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" is a little obscure but, as Dr Bruce says, its general bearing is plain: "What is happening to Me now is nothing to what is going to happen to this people. The green tree represents innocence, the dry tree guilt, ripe for the fire of judgment." There is suffering and suffering in the world: some

¹ The idea here, as in Hosea x. 8, which is here quoted, seems to be not concealment merely but merciful extinction.

Via Dolorosa

of it is suffering for righteousness, undertaken at the Luke xxiii. call of duty or in the task of helping the world : 26-32.

even if we cannot help feeling a pang of pity there, let pity lose itself in admiration. There is also suffering which comes on men for their own sin, their sin persistent and unrepented : that needs our tears as it needed and received the tears of the Saviour.

3. The Master had *companions* upon the sorrowful way, strange companions whom we shall see more closely later on, but who are mentioned here because their presence beside Him added, as His enemies thought, the last touch of insult and indignity to His case. "There were also two other, malefactors," bandits!—"led with Him to be put to death." "Like goes to like," said the enemies of Jesus. But they did not know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor the power that was in those fainting Hands to pluck a brand from the burning. No, we shall not weep for Him. Tears for those who crucified Him, because for them the settled doom and the endless shame. But unto Him, glory and dominion for ever and ever.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

God forgive them that raise an ill report upon the sweet cross of Christ. It is but our weak and dim eyes that look but to the black side that makes us mistake. Those who can take that crabbed tree handsomely upon their back, and fasten it on cannily, shall find it such a burden as wings unto a bird or sails to a ship.

Samuel Rutherford

XCIV

THE CRUCIFIXION

“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others ; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, And saying, If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself. And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”—LUKE xxiii. 33-38.

Luke xxiii. 33-38. As the commentator hesitates on the margin of this tremendous theme, he cannot but admire the exceeding reserve with which the evangelist tells the story. All four evangelists must have been deeply moved as they wrote the tale of the Passion : the space they give to it shows how important they reckoned it, and hints how deeply it touched their hearts. But neither here nor anywhere else in the New Testament is there any sentimentalism, nor anything approaching the easy flow of words which might have come from shallower souls. And any one who follows them in retelling or in unfolding the story might well try to imitate their reticence, if only, deep down within, the heart be smitten, and

A broken
heart Love's
dwelling is.

The Crucifixion

the streams flow which are not mere emotionalism Luke **xxiii.**
but penitence and purpose. 33-38.

1. "They were come to the place which is called **The Skull.**
The Skull." So the R.V., our familiar name Calvary
having come from the Latin word used in the Vulgate.
There is little doubt now that this means a skull-
shaped hill—not a place of execution where skulls
were lying about. It may be that the place on the
map where this hill should be marked will never be
found: it is lost, and it may be well lost, lest the
children of men, childish at the best, heap upon it
too much idolatry of devotion. Devout fancy played
much with this spot long ago: Calvary was the place
where Adam's skull was buried; or the place where
the cross stood was the place where once stood the
Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. John
Donne has his quaint fancy about this:

"We think that Paradise and Calvary,
Christ's cross and Adam's tree, stood in one place:
Look, Lord; and find both Adams met in me;
As the first Adam's sweat surrounds my face,
May the last Adam's blood my soul embrace."

But we may accept his aspiration without accepting
his archaeology: we have moved away from the age
of such fancies, and we know that the realities of
the Hill of Shame are not physical but moral and
spiritual. Whether Adam knew that hill or not, it
is unfenced and open to our faith and love.

2. "There they crucified Him," and with Him the **Divine**
two who were intended to shame Him by their **Compassion**
company. It is better not to dwell on the horrors
of that moment of physical and mental agony: we

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 33-38. take refuge where the evangelist takes refuge in listening to the prayer which fell like a heavenly intercession upon that scene of hellish cruelty, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." It is disquieting to notice how limited and uncertain is the manuscript evidence for this phrase. Even some quite conservative scholars accept it as a genuine fragment of Christian tradition though not as part of St Luke's original Gospel. But surely it bears its internal evidence of authenticity: it could not have been dreamed; and indeed Stephen's prayer for those who stoned him, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," suggests that he was taking his Master for an example and pattern. For whom was the Master praying? Not perhaps for the Roman soldiers who actually did the grim work of crucifying—they were but tools with no moral responsibility, but for those standing behind them, inspiring, directing, and especially the Jewish authorities whose evil will had set the whole train of events in motion. They did not in the deepest sense know what they were doing: "if thou hadst known," was Christ's own cry over Jerusalem: "I wot that through ignorance ye did it as did also your rulers," said Simon Peter after the cross was past. It has sometimes been pointed out that the Christian doctrine of charity and the duty of the forgiveness of injuries were akin to much in Stoicism. Marcus Aurelius held that all vice came from ignorance, and this idea, as Lecky puts it, "imparted to all his judgments a sad but tender charity." "If men do ill," said the Emperor-Stoic, "it is evidently in spite of themselves

The Crucifixion

and through ignorance." . . . "It is right that man **Luke xxiii** should love those who have offended him: he will **33-38**.

do so when he remembers that all men are his relations, and that it is through ignorance and involuntarily that they sin." It is, however, one thing to write such wise sayings in the seclusion of an imperial palace: it is another to breathe such a spirit in prayer from the very midst of men's uttermost cruelty. This latter glory is our Master's, and that is one great reason why we turn to this hour of darkness and pain to find Divinity shining, recognisable by its divine compassion.

3. For a moment or two, our eyes are drawn by the narrative away from the Crucified to sundry Groups round the Cross. groups around the cross. (a) We see the soldiers at the foot of the Shameful Tree, parting Christ's raiment and casting lots for it: it was their perquisite, and a little gambling diversified their task. (b) We see the people—with their fierce mood apparently abated now. They "stood beholding." The words "with them" later in the verse are probably not genuine and one would like to think that a mood of silence had fallen on the populace, and that their gibes and jeers were ended. But the parallels are too clear as to those who passed by, wagging their heads and bidding Him come down from the cross. (c) We see and hear the rulers—implacable, insulting, scornful to the last—deriding Him and saying, "He saved others, let Him save Himself, if He be the Christ of God, the Chosen." How little insight they had, how little understanding even of their own Scriptures, not to know that God sometimes chooses

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 33-38. His instruments in the furnace of affliction, that He sometimes elects His servants to the hard task of giving all and keeping nothing back! (d) Then once more we see the soldiers again, catching the jesting mood from these official spectators, tantalising the dying lips with their sour wine, and saying, "If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself." It haunts the heart like an evil, mocking melody—the way in which the taunt "Save Thyself" rings through this passage. The rulers, "Let Him save Himself"; the soldiers, "Save Thyself"; the malefactor, "Save Thyself." Had it not been the great temptation of His life from the wilderness onwards, "Save Thyself"? It was pursuing Him to the last, but the hour of His deliverance was at hand.

**The Omen of
a Title.**

4. Though they vary slightly in detail, all the four evangelists give the inscription over the cross, including the vital phrase "the King of the Jews," with which Pilate pointed his sorry jest, not perhaps so much against the Sufferer as against the Jews whom he hated and despised. And St Luke and St John agree that it was written in the three current languages of that place and time—Greek and Latin and Hebrew. Believing souls of later ages may be pardoned if at sight of that placard they cry out, *Nomen omen*: here surely was one of those strangely prophetic happenings which occasionally enter human experience, when apparently accidental finger-posts point far beyond themselves.

It is not merely that He Who hung upon the cross, though then He had no sign of royalty save

The Crucifixion

His crown of thorns, has proved Himself the chosen **Luke xxiii.**
King of ten thousand thousand hearts, the one King **33-38.**
worth serving, worth living for, worth dying for. In that sense at least the name was an omen, and Pilate's jest proves an eternal Gospel. But the mind broods on this also—"in Hebrew and Greek and Latin." Each of these languages was the servant of an idea. To the Greek the dominant idea was that of beauty; and there is a voice deep down in the heart which tells us that the loveliness of the Crucified is more satisfying than the loveliness of the Apollo, and that all other beauty pales in comparison with this beauty—the perfect holiness in union with the perfect love. It was written in Greek—*the King! Nomen omen!* Latin was the language of a people whose dominant interest was law and government. The genius of a nation reflects itself in its speech, and there is something in a Latin sentence—orderly, massive, sonorous, a trifle hard—which seems to reflect that instinct of order and dominion. And does it not teach us something to find the language of government upon the cross of Jesus? There was a rebellion which even Rome could not tame—the rebellion of the heart. There was a revolt which even thundering legions could not quell—the revolt of the will. There was a pride which knew no sceptre and no code of laws, the pride of the high heart of man. And the cross was an instrument most skilfully devised of God to tame that rebellion: here centres the Empire of redeemed souls: here rises that law which is perfect liberty. It was written in Latin—*the King! Nomen omen!* And Hebrew was also

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 33-38. the servant of a dominant idea, and that idea was righteousness. The master word of the Old Testament, as Matthew Arnold has taught us, was righteousness. And it was fitting and prophetic that the language which was consecrated by such a message should be seen upon the cross of Jesus. Here was triple righteousness—righteousness perfect in every thought and deed, righteousness tested by uttermost sacrifice, righteousness willing to bestow itself on all who were willing to come. It was written in Hebrew—*the King! Nomen omen!* The mockery of a moment is the verity of all time. Lord Christ, Thou art the King!

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst
Thou—so wilt Thou!
So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest,
uttermost Crown.

Robert Browning

XCV

HIS EXODUS

“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.”—LUKE xxiii. 39-49.

LONG ere this, on the Mount of Transfiguration, He Luke xxiii. had spoken, as we saw, of “His exodus” which He 39-49. was to accomplish at Jerusalem. The hour of that exodus is almost here: deliverance is at hand. And the Liberator, in accomplishing His own exodus, does not go forth alone.

That Hill outside the City gate, destined to be The Three the focus of all contradictories, the meeting-place of Crosses.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 39-49. all the ways of the world, was strangely representative that day, even in the three crosses which were reared upon it. Those three gibbets bore upon themselves a whole moral universe, Innocence on one, Guilt unrepented on another, Penitence and Faith on a third. The Innocent died for all, yet then, as since, some for whom He died did not know nor care. "One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, Art Thou not the Christ? Save Thyself and us." This is the reading of the best MSS., and perhaps the taunt was all the more bitter in this direct form. But his neighbour was in a different mood. Had he, once upon a time, in some almost forgotten hour, heard Christ preach the Gospel? Or round some camp-fire had he heard men discuss whether this much talked-of Jesus of Nazareth could be the promised Messiah? Or was he merely more observant than his fellow, and therefore at once arrested and quieted by the wonderful gentleness and patience of the Master? But he turned to his companion, saying, "Dost thou not even *fear* God"—apart from any finer feeling—"seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this Man hath done nothing amiss." Then this dying soul broke into one of the immortal prayers of history: "Jesus, remember me"—the best MSS. omit "Lord"—"Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom." Two important MSS. have "into Thy Kingdom," but, whichever shade of meaning is adopted, apparently this man had vision to see One Who, in spite of His present weakness and

His Exodus

suffering, was destined to reign. It was a prayer of Luke xxiii. amazing faith and amazing insight: once more the 39-49-day of the Cross is a day of judgment and the last are first and the first last.

Yet the wonder of the prayer pales before the A Great Answer.
wonder of the reply. "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee"—that grave deliberation and emphasis which had so often prepared the way for a word of eternal life—"To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." What a confidence is here, and what compassion unspeakable, and what quiet assurance of victory in the midst of all seeming defeat! The soul finds music and merey in every word. *In Paradise*—it scarcely matters whether the reference was to the brighter zone of Hades or to heaven, the immediate presence of God: it is enough that the word promised a place of security and peace. *With Me*—away from those fierce faces, those venomous looks, in a comradeship begun most strangely yet not soon to be broken. Ambrose¹ is right when he says, *Ubi Christus ibi vita, ibi regnum*: where Christ is, there is the life, and there the kingdom. The soul has all it needs when it hears a Saviour say "with Me." And *to-day*—we think out the meaning of that word and it sends the imagination on an almost incredible track. Was there ever a stranger day's pilgrimage—beginning in the early morning in the condemned cell, leading in its first hours to this hill of shame, this climax of misery and agony, but ending in the evening beyond the power of pain and death, in some far-off realm of repose and peace, with

¹ Quoted by Dr Plummer.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 39-49. Christ? The thought of the day's journey of that one soul makes the brain dizzy, but it affords something on which the heart can rest. We have already seen that Christ's writ runs far, and never is His grace seen more exquisitely, more triumphantly than in this last word at once of authority and of mercy.

“I tracked Thy footsteps long,
For where Thou wert there would Thy servant be;
But now methought the silence, now the throng,
Would part me still from Thee.

I sought Thee 'mid the leaves,
I found Thee on the dry and blasted tree;
I saw Thee not until I saw the thieves
There crucified with Thee.”¹

The
Darkened
Sky.

The hour was one in which the very physical world seemed to be in sympathy with the moral transactions and tragedies which were happening in the life of man. It sometimes happens so. “It was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And the sun failed”—a better attested reading than the familiar “the sun was darkened”: the moon being at the full at Passover time, an eclipse in the ordinary sense was impossible. “And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst”—an event apparently linked by St Matthew with the earthquake which he records. Some have wondered whether this strange portent could have anything to do with the fact mentioned in Acts vi. 7 that “a great company of priests was obedient to the faith.” We need not indulge in

¹ Dora Greenwell.

His Exodus

dubious speculations nor raise questions which cannot be settled. But we can understand the symbolism which the idea took on for men who felt themselves at the meeting-point of two dispensations, that which was old being ready to vanish away, and the new era of access and liberty dawning in Christ. **Luke xxiii. 39-49.**

St Luke omits the great cry of desolation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Some have read that as a bitter cry of disillusionment, a loving and heroic soul discovering that all its love and all its heroism had been in vain, and giving up in utter despair the vain struggle with the cruel fate that rules the universe. But those who so read that cry leave out two very important things. They leave out the Resurrection, which brought morning after that midnight; - and they leave out the prayer of faith and self-surrender which St Luke so happily preserves, and on which the Redeemer breathed His last. "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Dr Moffatt gives the simple and beautiful rendering, "Father, I trust My spirit to Thy hands." "And having said thus, He gave up the ghost." The familiar words of the Psalms, which had been with Him immediately before to express His agony of desolation, were with Him again to express the triumph of His trust. He had sounded the depths. But now His feet touched land. And the enemy was as still as a stone till He passed over. **Into Thy Hands.**

Once more in the end of this section our gaze turns reluctantly from the cross and Him Whose frame still hangs upon it to the bystanders and what **The Watchers by the Cross.**

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 39-49. they said and did. “When the centurion”—the definite article suggests the man who was in charge of the company of soldiers carrying out the crucifixion—“saw what was done, he glorified God”—it sounds as if a final echo of the angels’ song “Glory to God in the highest” were meeting us even in this strange place—“he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man.”

Then we see the people, remorse coming uppermost now, their fierceness slaked at last; “all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned.”

And last we see the friends of Jesus: “all His acquaintance”—let us hope that this includes the Apostles who forsook Him and fled, “and the women that followed Him from Galilee stood afar off, beholding these things.” Next to the cross itself, we study most eagerly these sorrowful faces, these loyal hearts. Yet they cannot conceal from us a great multitude whom the ages have gathered behind them, sorrowful because they have shared in the sin that slew Him, loyal and grateful because for their sakes He became obedient to the death of the Cross.

“O break, O break, hard heart of mine;
Thy weak self-love and guilty pride
His Pilate and His Judas were:
Jesus, our Love, is crucified.
O Love of God! O Sin of Man!
In this dread act your strength is tried;
And victory remains with Love:
And He, our Love, is crucified.”

His Exodus

FOR MEDITATION AND THANKSGIVING

Luke xxiii

39-49.

When were Love's arms stretched so wide as
upon the Cross? When did they embrace so
much as when Thou, O Christ, didst gather
within Thy bosom the spears and arrows of the
mighty to open us a lane for freedom?

Dora Greenwell

XCVI

THE TOMB IN THE ROCK

“ And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor ; and he was a good man, and a just : (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them ;) he was of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews : who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid. And they returned and prepared spices and ointments ; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.”—LUKE xxiii. 50-56.

Luke xxiii. 50-56. To come into Joseph's quiet garden after the sights and sounds of Calvary is to enter an atmosphere of rest and peace. It sets one thinking of that other Garden far away—what is its latitude and longitude ? by what track among the stars did the Spirit of the Redeemer travel to find it ?—the Paradise where He and the penitent malefactor were to find rest together. And we, with our Christian knowledge of what was to happen on “ the third day,” can afford to look at the garden tomb and enjoy the fragrant tranquillity which surrounds it, thankfully recognising that His sufferings are over and His work accomplished. Professor Bradley in a lecture on the Sublime touches

The Tomb in the Rock

on the sublimity of Death. "The silence of night, **Luke xxiii.** when it seems sublime, is apprehended not as the 50-56. absence but as the subdual of sound—the stillness wrought by a power so mighty that at its touch all the restless noises of the day fall dumb—or the brooding of an omnipotent peace over the world. And such a peace it is, an unassailable peace, that may make the face of death sublime."¹ Never was death so sublime as in that silent Form just taken from the cross: never had such a life been lived or such a death died. And now that the body of the Master is laid in its resting-place, the peace seems sweeter, more perfect, more unassailable than that of an ordinary grave. Shall we apply the words, "Under the shadow of His wings shalt Thou take refuge?"

Such comforting thoughts were, however, very far **Loyal Hearts.** away from the little loyal band of mourners who laid their precious Burden in the rock-cut sepulchre. Their thoughts were of grief, defeat, and despair: the wings on which that evening came were darker than the common wings of night: out of their lives the greatest Light had faded: they were attending the burial of hope, the obsequies not only of the King but of the Kingdom. Or perhaps mind and heart were too numb to think at all: the mechanical tasks which call imperatively to our human sorrow in an hour of bereavement are sometimes the best relief. We follow these loyal hearts, sympathising with their grief, yet seeing, as they could not meantime see, God's rose of dawn beyond their darkness.

¹ *Oxford Lectures on English Poetry*, p. 49.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 1. "And, behold, there was a man named Joseph."
50-56.

Among so many bitter enemies and wavering disciples, it was good that the Master had found at least one powerful friend. St Matthew mentions his wealth. St Luke touches rather upon his standing in the community—he was "a councillor," a member of the Sanhedrin; upon his character—"a good man and a just"; and upon his religious quality—like Simeon and Anna in chapter ii, he "waited for the Kingdom of God." St John adds the interesting detail that he was a disciple of Jesus, "but secretly for fear of the Jews." Apparently, in spite of the secrecy of his discipleship, he had some moral courage, for "he had not consented to the counsel and deed" of the Sanhedrin of which he was a member: whether he had actually voted against the condemnation we are not told. Now at last the secret disciple emerges plainly enough into the light of day.

The
Reverence
of Love

2. "This man went unto Pilate and begged the body of Jesus," and all his dealing with the precious gift was in marked, intentional and most beautiful contrast to the dishonour and cruelty with which it had been handled before. "He took it down and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone." Then the next clause is made curiously emphatic in the Greek by a triple negative reinforcing the one negative which alone makes grammar in an English translation: "wherein never man before was laid." In every word of the story and in every act of Joseph and his helpers, uncommon honour and love are seen. Christ had been

The Tomb in the Rock

arrested like a common criminal. He had been **Luke xxiii.** treated with indignities which even the coarsest of **50-56.** the coarse might well have been spared. He had been executed with two common bandits at a public place of execution. At least there should be nothing common about His last resting-place—He should have it for His very own, this King so strangely crowned. St Luke says nothing at this stage about the stone at the door of the sepulchre, though it is worth noting that one important manuscript (Codex Bezae) here inserts a clause saying that there was laid against the tomb a stone which a score of men could scarcely move.

Verses 54-56 are peculiar to St Luke. “That day **A Sabbath of Sorrow.** was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on.” The whole chronology of the death of Christ is a fascinating theme, but too elaborate for discussion except in the larger commentaries. Much depends on whether this was the ordinary preparation for the weekly Sabbath, or whether it was the preparation for the Passover also. For our present purpose, technical and antiquarian questions fade beside the intense personal interest of the scene—those loyal women friends from Galilee, who had done so much for Him, who had received so much from Him, who had built all their hopes on Him, following the little burial procession till they “beheld the sepulchre and how His Body was laid.” Then “they returned,” not allowing the duties of love and grief to interfere with the familiar obligations of religion, for they not only “prepared spices and ointments,” but “rested the Sabbath Day according to the Commandment,”

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. not knowing, in their grief, how near at hand was the
50-56. supreme surprise of God's loving kindness.

The Lesson
of the
Winding
Sheet.

Ere we leave the garden with them we pause to look in two directions. We look, like the women, into the tomb, and behold the body and how it is laid. Thought and feeling stir instantly in response to that amazing sight, and though we must not allow ourselves to grow morbid or sentimental we might gaze long enough without coming to an end of our thinking. Here is the close and climax of our Lord's estate of humiliation—the last step on the ladder of lowliness which He descended for us men and for our salvation. Cardinal Manning wrote in a private journal that he wanted always to keep before him St Charles' devotion to the Burial of Jesus. "I suppose he loved it because it was the most perfect humiliation of God Incarnate—to be taken down from the cross, wound in linen, and laid out of sight in the earth which He had made. I cannot escape many things which will demand of me a heroic patience and self-control. To this end, I will try to remember the Winding Sheet and the Sepulchre." This is indeed a place of meditation for high heads and proud wills. Christ Himself brought Peter to this place of meditation in the after days when He said to him, "Another shall find thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." If He, the Highest and the Holiest, laid His head so low in submission and in service, what discipline may not be needful before proud and wilful disciples are changed into the likeness of their Lord? We do well to remember the Winding Sheet and the Sepulchre.

The Tomb in the Rock

But we are in the secret of God's working and know what the third day is going to bring forth ; so, as we leave the tomb behind us, we can see the stone rolled to it without despair : we can look around and ahead and reflect upon the exceeding strangeness of existence on this redeemed earth. Still under the shadow of that gaunt and empty cross upon the hill, we are at the point where all paradoxes meet. Christ's enemies have ended His earthly activities. He was delivered to their will and they have willed Him out of existence. They have wiped His Kingdom off the map of the world. Yet it is here and now that God makes Him a Universal, the property not of Judea alone but of all lands, peoples, and ages—not the property of the few friends who begged His body but of all believing souls to the end of time. It is here and now that Infinite Power and Patience begin to intertwine His name with history until the Universe would have to be torn in pieces ere it could be disentangled from the name of Jesus.

Luke xxiii.

50-56.

An End and
a Beginning

“ I see His blood upon the rose
And in the stars the glory of His eyes.
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.
I see His face in every flower ;
The thunder and the singing of the birds
Are but His voice ; and, carved by His power,
Rocks are His written words.
All pathways by His feet are worn.
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
His Crown of Thorns is twined with every thorn,
His Cross is every tree.”¹

¹ Joseph M. Plunkett.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiii. 50-56. The narrow limits of the winding sheet and the sepulchre are but for a moment : nations far away in place and time are stirring in their sleep to rise and welcome the universal Saviour.

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Lord, Who hast done so much for me, be pleased only to make it effectual to me, that it may not be useless and lost. O sweetest Saviour, clothe my soul with Thy holy robe ; hide my sins in Thy wounds and bury them in Thy grave : and let me rise in the life of grace, and abide and grow in it, till I arrive at the Kingdom of glory. Amen.

Jeremy Taylor

XCVII

THE LIVING ONE

“ Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments : And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead ? He is not here, but is risen : remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee. Saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre ; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.”—LUKE xxiv. 1-12.

THE contrast between the atmosphere of chapter Luke xxiv. xxiii. and that of chapter xxiv. is one of the miracles 1-12. of literature and of history : the very language The seems to change its colour and accent : if words can Breaking of the Day. carry tints as well as tones here is the contrast between midnight and morning. And that wonder is but the external sheath for the greatest wonder of

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv. history. The best evidence for the resurrection of
1-12. our Lord is the resurrection of His Church. It is possible for scepticism to make much, if it will, of the fragmentary records of Christ's risen life, and the apparent discrepancies between the records that exist. But the change that passed upon the mind and outlook of the disciples is past the power of scepticism to obliterate. Who can deny the grief and despair of the little mourning company who followed Joseph of Arimathea in paying honour to the Dead? But just as little can be denied the joy and triumph into which they were quickened after a few short hours had passed. The attempts to give a naturalistic explanation of that change have ludicrously broken down. There remains only one reasonable and adequate explanation of that revived faith, that overflowing gladness, those trumpet-toned proclamations. It is that when they said "The Lord is risen indeed" they spoke what was true. The Resurrection of the Master is needed to account for the resurrection of the Church, and the resurrection of the Church is only explained by the resurrection of the Master.

But let us get to the story, taking it as we find it here. St Luke sees it from his own angle, tells it in his own way, evidently possesses sources of information which are his exclusive property.

The Day of
Days.

1. "Now upon the first day of the week, at day-dawn"—it is tempting to dwell for a moment upon that note of time. The early hour tells of their eagerness to resume their task of love as soon as possible after legal restrictions were removed; or does it hint

The Living One

a desire to accomplish their work before gaping **Luke xxiv.** crowds, possibly in a hostile mood, might be about ? **I-12.**

But the allusion to the day of the week is still more arresting. Those women coming to the sepulchre, though they did not know it, were adding a new day to the possessions of humanity. They were marking a track for the feet of the ages. Till then, it had been but a common day—this first day of the week : from then, it was to be “ the Lord’s Day,” full of a light and fragrance which no other day possessed. Emerson has a poem in which he describes the days, the daughters of Time, marching single in an endless file, and offering very varied gifts to men—diadems and faggots,

“ Bread, kingdoms, stars and sky that holds them all.”

But never was there a day so wealthily endowed as this “ first day of the week ” ; and the first day of all weeks since then has belonged to the aristocracy of days—enriched with a supernatural plenitude of remembrance and fellowship and hope.

2. But the women on that Easter morning could not know all that God had in store nor how prophetic for humanity was the way that they trod. “ They came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared.” The phrase “ and certain others with them ” is omitted by some important manuscripts. Those spices in their hands show what their outlook was, and how completely vanished their faith and hope. They had come not to greet a living Saviour but to embalm a dead one : they had come for the last act in a drama of love and sorrow, not to

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv. see the re-opening of a story that should never end.
1-12. "Blessed," wrote St Peter, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." That living hope derived its name and its quality from its contrast with the dead hopes which had gone before—how dead they were let the spices testify!

Glory
unveiled.

3. Fairer and swifter than the dawn which was even now rushing up over the hills of Moab, the dawn of stupendous discovery broke upon these downcast souls, who, in God's strange providence, were sent out to meet it, the vanguard of rejoicing generations. They were on the brink of discoveries, positive and negative. They *found*—"the stone rolled away from the sepulchre." All the four evangelists mention this startling prelude to yet greater facts. Unless the reading of Codex Bezae, quoted in the previous chapter, be correct, this is St Luke's first reference to the stone—the definite article hinting at something well-known in Christian tradition and discussion. "They entered in and *found not* the body of the Lord Jesus"; was their first emotion a kind of stunned bewilderment, as though their world were reeling and matter and space refusing to obey their usual laws? or was it the sorrowful indignation attributed by the Fourth Gospel to Mary Magdalene, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him"? Yet even so discovery was only beginning: the Messengers of Light were at hand: "it came to pass,

The Living One

as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two **Luke xxiv.** men stood by them in shining garments." Dante's **1-12.** heaven is a study in light, light of different tints and hues and degrees of radiance.

"Forth from the last corporeal are we come
Into the heaven that is unbodied light,
Light intellectual, replete with love,
Love of true happiness replete with joy,
Joy that transcends all sweetness of delight."

It is a natural symbolism for the glory which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. And if ever human souls, walking in the darkness, were led to the door of heaven and bidden to gaze upon its glory, they were those women that amazing day-break—not because they saw glittering apparel but because life and immortality were brought to light before their eyes.

4. In the loving remonstrance which in that ^{They} moment met their troubled and unbelieving minds, ^{remembered} there is a strain of Patmos music. "Why seek ye the Living One among the dead?" That was to be His name for ever now—"I am the First and the Last and the Living One." It must have taken a clear demonstration, a sure conviction, to seal that name upon the hearts of the disciples, after they had seen Him, as the Apostles' Creed says with its three-fold emphasis, "Crucified, dead, and buried." The Romans and the Jews made His extinction trebly sure, not only rolling the stone to the door of the tomb, but sealing it and setting a watch. Yet in spite of them the name escaped, and soared over all their devices, and abides to this day—"the Living

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv. One "; because He escaped Who was their prey, and
1-12. it was not possible that He should be holden of death. The words in v. 6, "He is not here but risen," are not so well attested by the MSS. as the rest of the message, but their substance is involved in every line and every word. Then the remonstrance turns to a reminder. "Remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee"—we turn back to ix. 22 for one such forecast—"saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." "And they remembered His words." If we have never forgotten anything important, forgotten it perhaps not because we wanted to forget but because we had scarcely attended to it and had not taken it in—then we can cast the first stone at the disciple company for forgetting a promise so incredible and strange. It has been argued that the brain is not an apparatus for remembering but one for enabling us to forget: perhaps when the soul is parted from its material prison-house it will be all memory and will not be able to forget. The brain certainly sometimes functions as if this were indeed its design, until the shock of some stupendous providence pierces to the deeper levels of cognisance and we remember that we had forgotten—visions, promises, revelations, words of eternal life! "They remembered His words," and He was alive Who keeps His promises: though heaven and earth might pass away, His words had not passed away.

Morning
Songs.

5. The tidings began to spread. "Mary Magdalene and Joanna"—apparently the loyal friend men-

The Living One

tioned in viii. 3—"and Mary the mother of James," **Luke xxiv.** they and others with them told the great news to **I-12.** the Apostles. Again we meet the much-evidenced incredulity of the followers of the Crucified, the incredulity which plays so great a part in proving the historical reality of the Resurrection; "their words seemed to them as delirium, and they believed them not." By the time we reach v. 12 the general incredulity, in Simon Peter's case at least, has turned to a reflective wonder; "then arose Peter and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." This verse seems to be a condensed account of the matters which are told with much detail and exceeding verisimilitude in St John xx. 1-10. At the beginning of the marvellous story of this Gospel, we saw things happening which led first to wondering, and then to pondering, and then to praising (ii. 18-20). St Peter is beginning the same sequence. The night has been dark and desolate but the morning has come, and morning songs are not far away.

When we consider the place taken in the New Testament by the Resurrection of our Lord, there is one contrast which is extraordinarily impressive to an honest consideration. The story of the Resurrection is told not only briefly and fragmentarily but with a remarkable reserve: *the Resurrection itself is never described*. Yet this undescribed and indescribable Fact is for the New Testament people and their period *the dominating and creative Fact*. "The power of His resurrection" is evidenced by the New

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv. 1-12. Testament literature from beginning to end, by the New Testament Church with its ringing assurances and eager activities, by the whole momentum of the Christian movement which then began and is yet unspent. There is much we cannot understand ; yet when we study these things the sense of historical reality refuses to leave us. The joy of those first incredulous astonished souls sings to us across the ages, "The Lord is risen." And we are thankful to answer in the full assurance of the same faith "The Lord is risen indeed."

FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER

O God, Who by the lowliness of Thy Son hast raised a fallen world, grant to Thy faithful people perpetual gladness ; and as Thou hast delivered them from eternal death, so do Thou make them partakers of everlasting joys. Through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Sacramentary of Gelasius

XCVIII

THE EMMAUS JOURNEY

“ And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad ? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art Thou only a Stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days ? And He said unto them, What things ? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people : And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel : and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre ; And when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said : but Him they saw not. Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken : Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory ? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went : and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us : for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread."—LUKE xxiv. 13-35.

Luke xxiv. THE style of St Luke, always beautiful, is here at its simplest and loveliest. The psychological atmosphere of the passage conveys a curious impression of sincerity and of reality to which only a very wilful scepticism would remain unresponsive. Here perhaps more than in any other of the resurrection narratives we get close to the authentic note and mood of those tremendous hours, as the disciples of Jesus lived through them and were brought through despair to triumph. And once a year at least, on the evening of every Easter Day, Emmaus seems to enjoy a brief but splendid hour as the metropolis of the spiritual universe: all roads lead thither.

There is phrase after phrase here on which we might gladly linger. Verse 17 is doubly vivid as the R.V. translates it: "He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another? *And they stood still, looking sad.*" We can see the involuntary pause on the highway, the wave of emotion surging up over their souls as the Stranger's question recalled them to their grief. Or again there is the artless question of Cleopas in the following verse: "*Art Thou only a Stranger in*

The Emmaus Journey

Jerusalem?” Perhaps the unknown Pilgrim was Luke xxiv. one of the Passover crowd, not in touch with what ^{13-35.} was happening in the city and dwelling only for a brief season on the margins of its life! Did the Master smile when He replied—He, the very Paschal Lamb of God’s sending, a Stranger at the Passover Feast? Or yet again there is that haunting past tense of v. 21, “*We trusted* that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” That past tense enshrines an agony of disillusionment. Next to the *Lama sabachthani* of the cross it is the saddest word in the New Testament: there is sunset in it and a starless night. But among all the details, lovely, sorrowful, and tender, three things stand out as supremely deserving of study—the Opened Scripture, the Burning Heart, and the Broken Bread.

1. First there was *the Opened Scripture*. “Begin-
ning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Where was His starting point, and what did He include? If He began with Moses, perhaps He took them to the Passover and the sprinkled blood, leading them on, though with thoughts in His heart which they meantime could not comprehend, to the great hours of triumph when the sea fled and Jordan was driven back. And when He went on into the prophets He could not have left out the Suffering Servant, Who, though despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, was destined to see His seed and to prolong His days and to divide the spoil with the strong. They did not know whither they were being led—these two

The Past
Unfolded.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv. 13-35. sad, bewildered minds—under the Stranger's guidance; but under His magic touch the whole past was stirring and its forecasts were about to turn themselves into achievements and revelations.

It is not meaningless that One Who bears His wound-prints upon Him should thus read the riddle of history. The clue to all life's deepest problems can only be found through suffering: to flee from sacrifice is to flee from education. This lesson had been well learned by the Christian consciousness by the time the Book of Revelation was written, and men saw "a Lamb as it had been slain" opening the sealed book of human destiny. It may be that the prophets and the other great sacrificial spirits of the past can only speak in intelligible language to those who are themselves sacrificial in life and purpose; and so He Who offered Himself without spot unto God has a rational claim to be their best Interpreter.

"Do men dare to call Thy Scripture
Mystic forest, unillumin'd nook?
If it be so—O my spirit!—
Then let Christ arise on thee, and look!
With the long lane of His sunlight
Shall be cut the forest of His Book."

It may have been near sunset ere the pilgrims reached their home at Emmaus; but, through a wider landscape than the Judean slopes could supply, a lane of sunlight had been cut by the Stranger's words, and something awoke within them to answer the glory and the beauty.

The Emmaus Journey

2. For the second outstanding point is *the Burning Heart*. “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” So the outward word found its inward answer and confirmation. It is a difficult matter to define the inspiration of Scripture, or to describe that quality in it which makes the Bible different from all other literature that is or has been. Perhaps it has never been better put than in the memorable words of William Robertson Smith: “If I am asked why I receive Scripture as the Word of God, and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the fathers of the Protestant Church—Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us in Him His will for our salvation. And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul.” *The witness of God’s Spirit in our hearts*—that is the inward glow that confirms the outward revelation. Could we have a finer illustration of that working than we have here, when the Christ opens the Scripture to the two pilgrims, and their hearts, they scarcely know how or why, kindle within them to answer the message? These two souls are having a share in Pentecost forty days before the general Pentecost arrives: they have the witness of the Spirit within them, and in the depths of their being Revelation flames upon its triumphant way.

Luke xxiv.
13-35.

The Inward
Fire.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv.
13-35.

How many hearts have been kindled since then on that same highway where Love and Sorrow open the secrets of life, and the inward conviction burns, proclaiming that the reading is true! Blaise Pascal must have been somewhere in the Emmaus latitudes on that memorable night of November 23, 1654, when he wrote in his journal the one word *Fire* to record the most memorable spiritual experience of his life, and followed it with the jotting, "Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy," and then with the name of Jesus Christ, written down more than once, by itself, as if it were the answer to all questions, the satisfaction of all hunger and thirst. If the Emmaus disciples had kept a journal, some of Pascal's entries might have suited for the record of their Easter evening. They too might have written *Fire*, after their hearts had been warmed so strangely. They might have written "Joy, joy, tears of joy," for if they hastened back to Jerusalem without tears and laughter they were scarcely human. And above all, like Pascal, they might have written down "Jesus Christ," for the mysterious Stranger was their Lord returned, and the past tenses of their despair were changed into the present tenses of joy and triumph.

He was
Known of
them.

3. This finally became plain in the last great event of that illuminated evening—the *Breaking of the Bread*. Was there ever sublimer simplicity than that of the narrative here, or a style more instinct with reality and truth? "It came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." Was it the familiar,

The Emmaus Journey

characteristic gesture which gave them their clue, **Luke xxiv.** bringing back to them as by magic the atmosphere ¹³⁻³⁵ of some unforgotten meal on the hillside or in the Upper Room? Now again, as so often before, He was not Guest merely but Host, identified by His own characteristic act and interpreted by His chosen symbol. A symbol is such a small thing, yet it can overflow with great meanings. We feel it in connection with national emblems: they are in one aspect so trifling, "some stars, lilies, leopards, a crescent, a lion, an eagle, or other figure which came into credit God knows how," Emerson says. Yet they are so mighty after all: these things, he adds, "on an old rag of bunting, blowing in the wind, on a fort at the ends of the earth, shall make the blood tingle." Dr John Oman defines a symbol as "an interpretation to the heart." The phrase perfectly describes the symbolism of the Master's act in that Emmaus cottage—it was an interpretation to the heart, and two hearts leaped to meet it. "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave." It was so like Him to do this. It was His very Self in an act, and His sacrifice in a symbol, and His redemption in a gift. Did ever so small a symbol hold so much? "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight."

Some one has defined the Christian life as "a long Emmaus pilgrimage." This is not a contradiction in terms nor a vain dream of piety and poetry, for now that He is risen and ascended there is no more geography in the Kingdom of God. The believing heart has everywhere its Holy Land. It finds any-

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv. 13-35. where the Emmaus where it meets its Lord and welcomes Him as Guest and Host. From the Holy Table of Communion it is scarcely even a step to Emmaus : we arrive before we begin to travel if it is with a believing, worshipping, kindled heart that we set out. And when we get there we need never depart : there is no need for the warm glow to fade from our hearts, nor for the Living Bread to remove from the grasp of our hunger. “ Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

FOR MEDITATION AND THANKSGIVING

Did He begin to love before thou loved'st,
and will not He continue now ?

Richard Baxter

XCIX

THE ENDLESS JOY

“ And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled ? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts ? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself : handle Me, and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat ? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day : And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you : but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.”—LUKE xxiv. 36-53.

WE come now to the end of St Luke's amazing and Luke xxiv. most beautiful story. These closing sentences are 36-53.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv. suffused with a joy no pen can describe. In the
36-53. preface to Vol. I there was quoted Renan's phrase
Through describing this Gospel as *l'hymne du peuple nouveau*,
Tears to full of laughter as well as of tears. After all the tears,
Laughter. we reach the laughter at last. Of those who had
passed with the Master through the hour and power
of darkness, who could have anticipated an end like
this? For the Jews and the Romans, the Cross was
the end—the end of a career, the end of a claim, the
end of a testimony. And even if, in some of the
disciples, faith, numbed and stupified, kept itself
alive a few hours longer, in hopes of an ultimate
miracle of escape, the Tomb marked for them the
end, the end of the claim, the end of the Kingdom,
the end of all things. Yet God, as ever, had plans
and ways exceeding above all that men asked or
thought. And this was His way of ending the story
—the ending of a dark night in a day which knew no
sunset.

Several phrases here possess a manuscript support which is far from complete. Avoiding minor points, it may be sufficient to note that Dr Moffatt encloses three phrases in square brackets as of doubtful authenticity—in v. 36 the words “and said to them, Peace to you,” the whole of v. 40, “with these words He showed them His hands and feet”; and in v. 51, the phrase “and was carried up to heaven”; while in v. 42 the reference to the honeycomb is omitted entirely. This measure of uncertainty as to the true text is easily accounted for. The records are but fragmentary at the best: there was a strong temptation for zealous copyists to eke them out by adding

The Endless Joy

phrases which quote or summarise from other Luke xxiv. Gospels, or which explain some point left unexplained. 36-53.

The absence here of any chronological scheme is also a difficulty. A hasty reading through these verses would suggest that everything took place without a break on the first Easter evening: it is only on reflection one sees that His leading them out as far as Bethany and being parted from them could scarcely have taken place in the darkness of the night, after the return from Emmaus and the meeting in the upper room. It is Luke himself who tells us in the opening of the Book of Acts about the forty days' fellowship before the Ascension, and perhaps there are meant to be pauses in the reading here to allow of lapse of time, say before v. 44 and before v. 50. But neither the uncertainties with regard to text nor those with regard to time affect the substance of the message, through which the primal joy still pulses to rebuke our doubting and fearful hearts.

1. The Lord Who was now beginning to transcend the world of space and time made Emmaus and Jerusalem one that night; they shared one surprise, one benediction. "As they thus spake," the two from Emmaus who were giving in their report of their own thrilling experience—"Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them." The impression given is of an appearance as sudden and unaccountable as the Emmaus vanishing had been. Even if the greeting of peace forms no part of the true text here, the peace He brought with Him was real and abiding, once the momentary panic was over, as of those who thought that they had seen a ghost. Once more we

Our Hands
have
handled.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv. hear the remonstrance of love, dealing with hearts
36-53. that are slow to believe, though this time it is no angel that speaks, but the very Master Himself: "Why are ye troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have." Even if v. 40 is a summary or quotation from the Fourth Gospel its substance is implied in v. 39, and the essential message is unaffected. It should not be forgotten that the verb here, "handle Me," is the same as is employed in 1 John i. 1: "That . . . which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have *handled* of the Word of Life." The resemblance does not seem likely to be accidental: was the writer of 1 John recalling this scene? or was the memory of this "handling" a common tradition of faith and love, easily turned into a parable of something larger than itself—the grip that men, even in a world of matter and of sense, had been able to take on the divine revelation?

Assurance
doubly sure.

2. The mood of the disciples had changed rapidly. They had passed from the uttermost of pessimism to the uttermost of gladness, from the despair in which only the very worst seemed true to the incredulity which hesitated because the message seemed too good to be true. "They yet believed not for joy and wondered." To that lingering unbelief the message was still addressed. The verses which tell of the Risen Christ eating before His disciples have puzzled many—so different does this action seem

The Endless Joy

from all our conceptions of a spiritual body, able to **Luke xxiv.** defy as apparently Christ's risen body did, the **36-53.** ordinary laws of matter and of space. Perhaps this is, in the essence of it, no more mysterious than that the risen body should still bear the marks of the wounds. But it may be best to bow our heads and say we do not understand. To minds re-assured, the lesson of the Emmaus highway was repeated. His own words were recalled: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you"—with you in the old sense, sharing the conditions of your mortal life—"that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets and in the psalms concerning Me." How blind these men had been! how ashamed they must now have felt of their blindness and how grateful for the light!—"Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day." But now the Emmaus lesson was enlarged, because it was made to open upon world-horizons: "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Were ever words spoken more gracious in their forgiving mercy than those of that last clause? T. T. Lynch has turned them into a song:

"Lord, when again Thou camest up
From hell's most darksome gate,
Rememberedst Thou that bitter cup
Of envy, wrath, and hate?

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv.
36-53.

Thou didst: and giving this for that,
Thy love, remitting sin,
Said, 'Take the cup of life, and at
Jerusalem begin.'

He trusted these men greatly when He sent them out with such a commission, and said to them, "Ye are witnesses of these things." They had failed Him before: He trusted them not to fail Him again.

A Fair Wind
for the Great
Venture

3. For they had their strength, as well as their task. "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you"—a condensed phrase to describe that Spirit who is so often promised: an Isaiah, a Joel, an Ezekiel may have spoken the promise, but behind them was a Father's love, and a Father's zeal, and a Father's longing to make His children more like Himself. "But tarry ye in the city"—the best MSS. omit the city's name—"until ye be endued with power from on high." The Master Who is already on the threshold of the eternal world is bidding His servants also open their hearts to a timeless reality which will enable them to live the life eternal in the midst of time. The "city" where the disciples waited to be clothed with power was the Jerusalem of the first days; but that city has many suburbs now; it includes meeting-places great and small in many lands and ages, solitudes where lonely souls have wrestled with unseen presences, scenes of bustling service in which men have sought out many inventions but have never got past the ancient lesson that prayer is power. As we read these great illimitable words the mists part to reveal the dawning of a new dispensation. The Church

The Endless Joy

begins to sing Glory not only to the Father and to Luke xxiv. the Son but to the Holy Ghost. These disciples had 36-53. a long journey and a hard task before them, but, as Samuel Rutherford says, "It is good to hoist up sail and make out, when a fair wind and a strong tide calleth." "Ye shall be endued with power": the fair wind is beginning to blow and the strong tide is calling.

4. The Ascension is a great mystery. It is more difficult for us to conceive than for the Church of the first days, because of that changed cosmogony to which allusion was made in connection with the Advent hope. Yet what better word than *Ascension* can we find to describe the fact that He was withdrawn into the unseen, His visible Ministry turned into a ministry invisible yet mighty, His localised presence raised to a new plane of power and service where locality is transcended and all needy hearts and lives are within reach of His throne? "No love, however true," Bishop Westcott says, "which sought to keep Him as He was seen on earth, could know the fullness of Christ's majesty." Yet no comment, no speculation, is so impressive as the sublimely simple words themselves. "He led them out as far as Bethany; and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them." Even if the next clause—"and carried up into heaven"—be not fully authenticated, we may well ask, Where else could He go? From the heavenlies He had come: to the heavenlies He returned. And from that last glimpse the disciples came back to their tasks of waiting and

Who is even
at the Right
Hand of God.

St Luke xviii.—xxiv.

Luke xxiv. 36-53. working, not in bitter grief for a friend that was lost, but in joyful thanksgiving for a Lord victorious, in whose victory and glory they hoped one day to share. "They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God."

That is the end. St. Luke himself in the beginning of the Book of Acts is careful to remind us that even this end was only the end of a beginning: his "former treatise" had to do with "all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach." So the ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem, rich and lovely though it be, is but a prelude to the ministry which is to bless all the ages. If by His Cross Christ conquered sin and if by His Resurrection He conquered death, by His Ascension He conquered time and space and withdrew from the sight of the eyes to be near to the needs of the soul. So faith has still its Olivet and love its Galilee. And the essence of the Gospel is being ever re-written in the experience of believing men.

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and to-day and for ever.









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